

No Peace, Only Pieces – The Sufi Mission in Kashmir!

Of late, eminent intellectuals, perfumed or otherwise, have been raising a stink about how **as a society we should be ashamed of** the many things we do. Their infinite wisdom manages to open our eyes (though, more often the third one)! We concur wholeheartedly with them, for, as a society we should be ashamed of naming innocent infants after marauding, mass murderers. But we are not!

As a society we should also be ashamed of blindly believing the propaganda that paints **Sufis** as the great proponents of humanity and upholders of faith and tolerance, for, nothing could be farther from truth. This false narrative has pulled more wool over the gullible masses' eyes than what has been used for weaving the caps after which they are named!

We have debunked few such myths about Sufis in this earlier [post](#).

Through this series of posts, we intend to examine the iconoclastic activities of **Shamsuddin Araqi** (c.1480 CE), one of the most "peaceful" Sufi missionaries of Kashmir and his role in the destruction of Hindu and Buddhist temples of **Kashmir, Ladakh and Gilgit-Baltistan**. We shall be highlighting Sufi Araqi's role in the historical religious transformation of Kashmir from a 100% Hindu to a near 100% Muslim society within a span of 100 years. His role in the slave trade of Hindus shall also be examined through the series. We shall also highlight the unprecedented retaliation of the Hindus of Jammu and Kashmir to these evil Sufis.

Information about Araqi comes primarily from **Tohafut-Ul-Ahbab**, his biography written by his disciple Muhammad Ali Kashmiri. He often accompanied his father on their visit to Shamsu'd-Din Araki in his hospice at Zadibal, Srinagar. The biography indicates that he was an eye witness to many events connected with Araki's 'piecesful' mission in Kashmir. Two more sources are the Persian chronicles **Baharistan-I-Shahi** (completed c.1614 CE) and **Tarikh-I-Kashmir**. Srivara's **Rajatarangini** also gives us a glimpse of Kashmir in those days. We also rely on epigraphical and archaeological evidence to accurately document the past.

About Araqi

Shamsuddin Araqi was born in Solghan in Northern Iran in the year A.H 828/A.D. 1424. He belonged to the court of Mirza Bayaqara (AD.1470-1505), the Timurid ruler of Herat. It so happened that the ruler fell ill and the Sufi was sent to Kashmir for procuring medicinal herbs for his patron. However, on reaching Kashmir, the Sufi saw that Kashmir was a Hindu society steeped in what he called "idolatry". In the beginning, he resorted to the option of Taqqiya by falsely claiming his allegiance to the Hamadani

Sufi order of Kashmir which had already been established in Kashmir, The truth is that he was , in fact, the Sufi of Nurbakhshiya order which had no presence in Kashmir. Araqi assumed the role of an emissary of Islam and propagated his Sufi order by waging Jihad on Hindus of Kashmir and destroying their temples.

Shamsu'íd-Din Araki had traveled from Srinagar to Skardu propagating Nurbakhshiya sect of Sufism, first in the valley of Kashmir and then in what is now called Gilgit and Baltistan. His mission in the southern foothills of Karakorum Range of the Himalayas was more than successful, and he left behind many people who have, ever since, stuck to his faith.

In his biographer Muhammad Ali Kashmiri's words,

From among the Shaykhs of high order and stalwarts among the spiritualists, none had the honour of breaking so many idols and destroying so many temples as Shamsu'íd-Din Araki had for the sake of propagating, and strengthening prosperity of Islam. Only he was blessed to eradicate lock, stock and barrel the dark and depraved customs of the community of darkness, their rituals, laws and beliefs. No Sultan, Padishah, Governor or noble could claim credit for an achievement like that[1].

Temple destruction

Here is the list of temples in Kashmir demolished by the Sufi

1) Hari Parbat

Tohafut-Ul-Ahbab records

" Araki proclaimed that the purpose of his visiting Kashmir was to pull down temples of Hindus. His first task was to put an end to the customs, traditions and habits of the Hindus (Kafirs) . He ordered a band of sufis and devotees to come to his presence. Taking this group along with him, he came to the Koh-i-Maran(Hari parbat). He made all the polytheists, corrupt and dissipated people run away from that place. He ordered baton charging of dancing and singing women, musicians and drumbeaters until they disappeared. A prayer house of the infidels existed at that place.Its foundation was dismantled, and the idol house was set on fire till it was fully consumed in flames. The bright candle of religion and Islam brought by the Prophet, and the law of his religion and the path of Mustafa and Murtaza (Ali) was lighted. He initiated the task of breaking the idols and idol..Later, he took along with him a group of his associates and Sufis and went up the heights of Hari Parbat. Together they destroyed even the smallest remnant of the temple and scattered pieces of the idols (previously broken by them). He directed that the ground where the temple stood be levelled so that the foundation for a Mosque (Bait-Ulla) could be laid on it"[2].

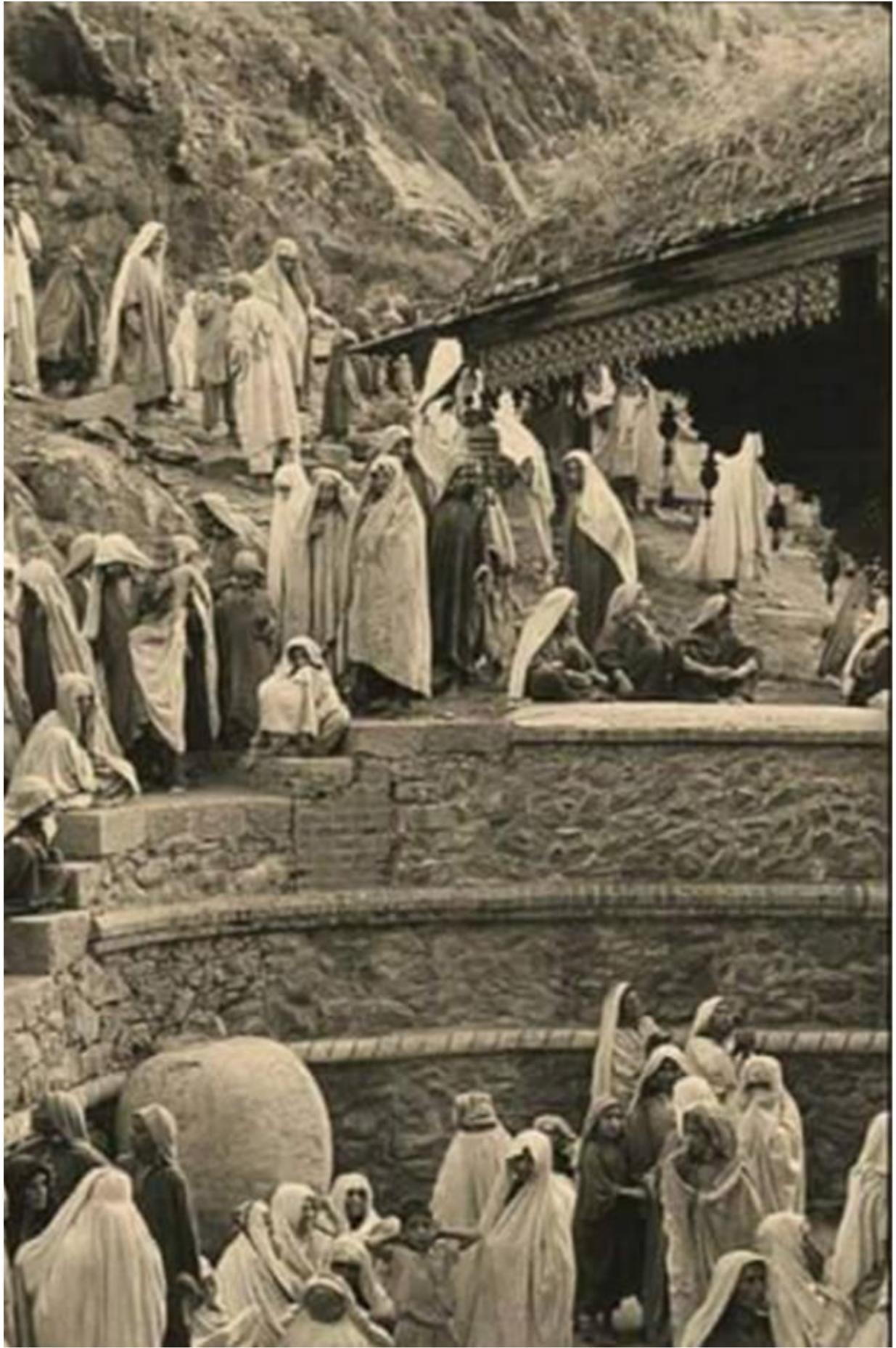
Hari Parbat(also known as ***Pradyumna***) is a temple dedicated to **Goddess Sharika**. The current temple was built during the days of Dogra rule.The original temple was built by Kashmiri king Ranaditya

Rajatarangini records, "The royal couple (Ranaditya) built the temple of Ranarambhasvamin and Ranarambhadeva and a matha for Pashupata (mendicants) on the hill of Pradyumana"[3]

Archaeologist **Mark Aurel Stein** remarks, "The E. slope and foot of the hill is now covered by extensive buildings, including sarais connected with the famous Muhammedan shrines of Muqaddam Sahib and AkhundMulla Shah. These probably occupy the sites of earlier Hindu structures such as the mathas referred to in the above verse"[4]



Ruins of Hari Parbat Temple which had been destroyed by Sufi Saint Araki. Picture taken before restoration.



An old picture of the Shrine of Makhdum Sahib that was built on earlier Hindu structure

Stein records, "A short distance to the S.E. of Bhimasvamin rock and outside Akbars fortress has the Ziarat of Bahaud-Din Sahib, built, undoubtedly with the materials of an ancient temple. The cemetery which surrounds it maintains also many ancient remains in its tombs and walls. To the S.W. corner of this cemetery rises a ruined gateway built of stone blocks of remarkable size and still of considerable height. This structure is traditionally believed by the Srinagar Pandits to have belonged to the temple of Shiva Praveshvara which Kalhana mentions as the first shrine created by Pravarasena in his new capital"[5]



A Sharada bilingual inscription near Ziarat of Bahauddin Sahib that replaced an earlier Hindu structure (pic courtesy : Kashmir Life)

2) Chamundi Temple

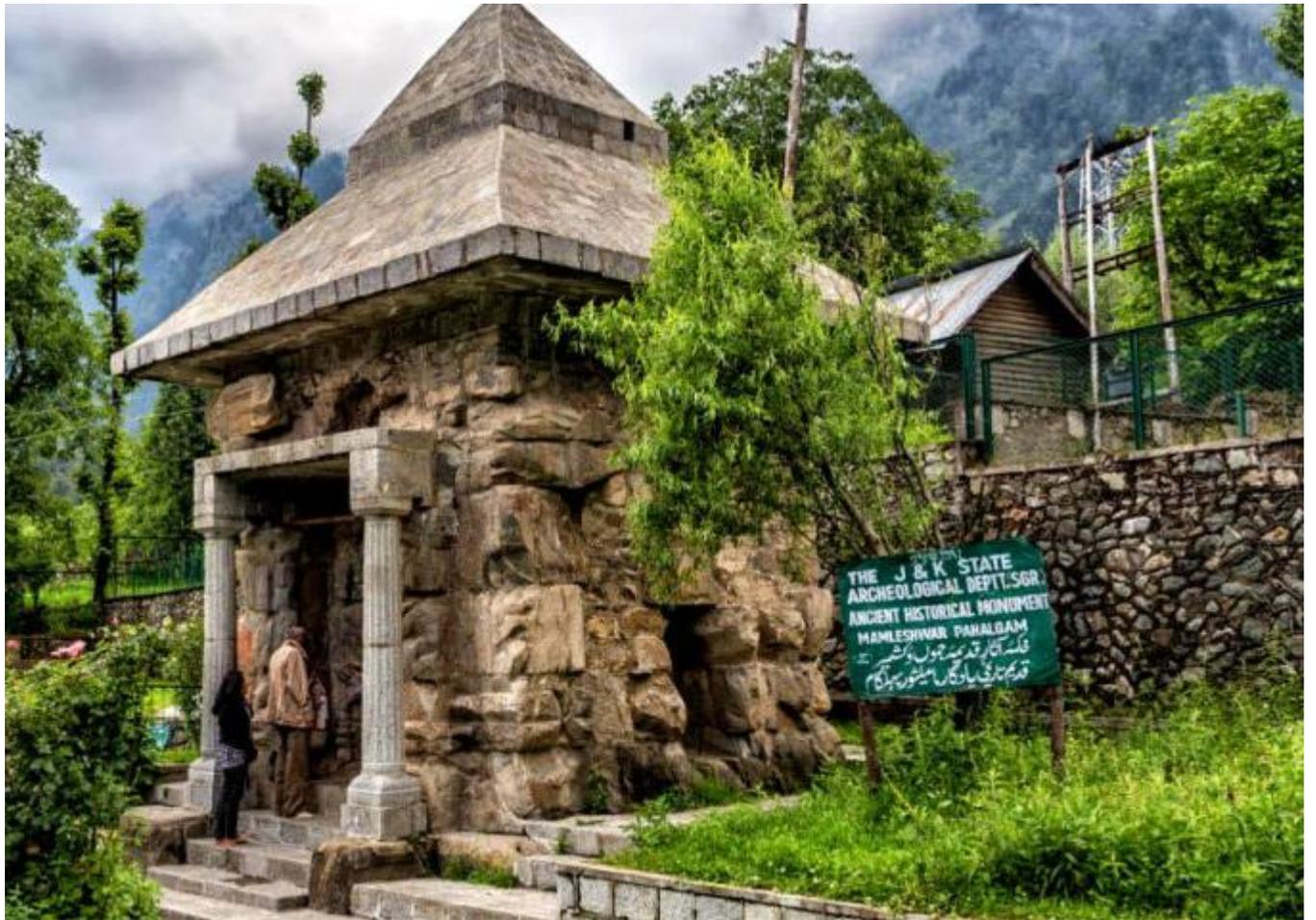
Its stone walls, five to six yards high, were left standing but the stones and earth that had formed the foundation of the temple inside were taken out. A mosque was raised inside the compound where the temple stood previously[6].

3) Mahasen(Mamaleshwara) Temple

In his search for timber for the construction of the hospice at Zadibal, Araki went to Kamaraj, the site of the Mahasen temple where Hindus used to visit for pilgrimage. The temple housed a stone idol surrounded by tall fir and deodar trees, felling of which was prohibited out of respect for the temple. After breaking the idols and setting the temple on flames to raze it to ground, Araki engaged himself in felling trees. At the site of the temple that was destroyed, he built a Jamíamosque[7].



A surviving structure of the great Maleshvara Temple destroyed by Sufi Saint ShamsuddinAraqi



A surviving structure of the great Maleshvara Temple destroyed by Sufi Saint ShamsuddinAraqi



Plate 10 Greenish-grey limestone adorsed bull capital—87 × 30 × 40cm, late first century BC–early first century AD, Mamal.

4) Warblaru(Varbal-Bhuteshwara)

A big temple existed in Baramulla area in Kamarajpargana. It was called Warbalaru in Kashmiri language. Araki destroyed it and erected a mosque over its ruins. An Imam and caller of prayer (muíezzin) were appointed for the mosque[8].

According to Kalahana'sRajatarangini, this agrahara was established by king Jaluka

With the wealth he had acquired by his martial exploits and energy king Jaluka of conspicuous intelligence founded the Agraharas of Varabala and others[9]

Archaeologist Stein notes

Varabala can be safely identified in view of the close agreement of the names with the modern hamlet of Barvul situated on the right bank of Kanknai (Kanakavahini) River. In the narrow gorge of the Kankanai River (Kanakavahini) which flows past the south foot of this spur (Harmukh), and some two miles above the hamlet of Vangath (Vasishthasrama), are found ruins of some seventeen temples of various age and dimension[10]



Ruins of Shiva Temple destroyed by Sufi Saint Shamsuddin Araki

5) Nandraja(Nandakeshwar Temple)

The imposing Nadraz temple in Shivaz in the Pargana of Kamaraj was destroyed by Araki and a Jamia mosque was raised on its ruins[11].



Ruins of the destroyed Nandakeshwar Temple

6) Bomar

Araki's converted disciple **Shri Bhat** was assigned the task of destroying this temple in Bomar. Since the villagers of Bomar were mostly soldiers by profession, they fought against the razing Sufis for two days but lost. The Temple was destroyed, the various trees in the premises felled to lay the foundation of a mosque. The idol placed under the threshold of the mosque so that visitors to the mosque would trample it under their feet.

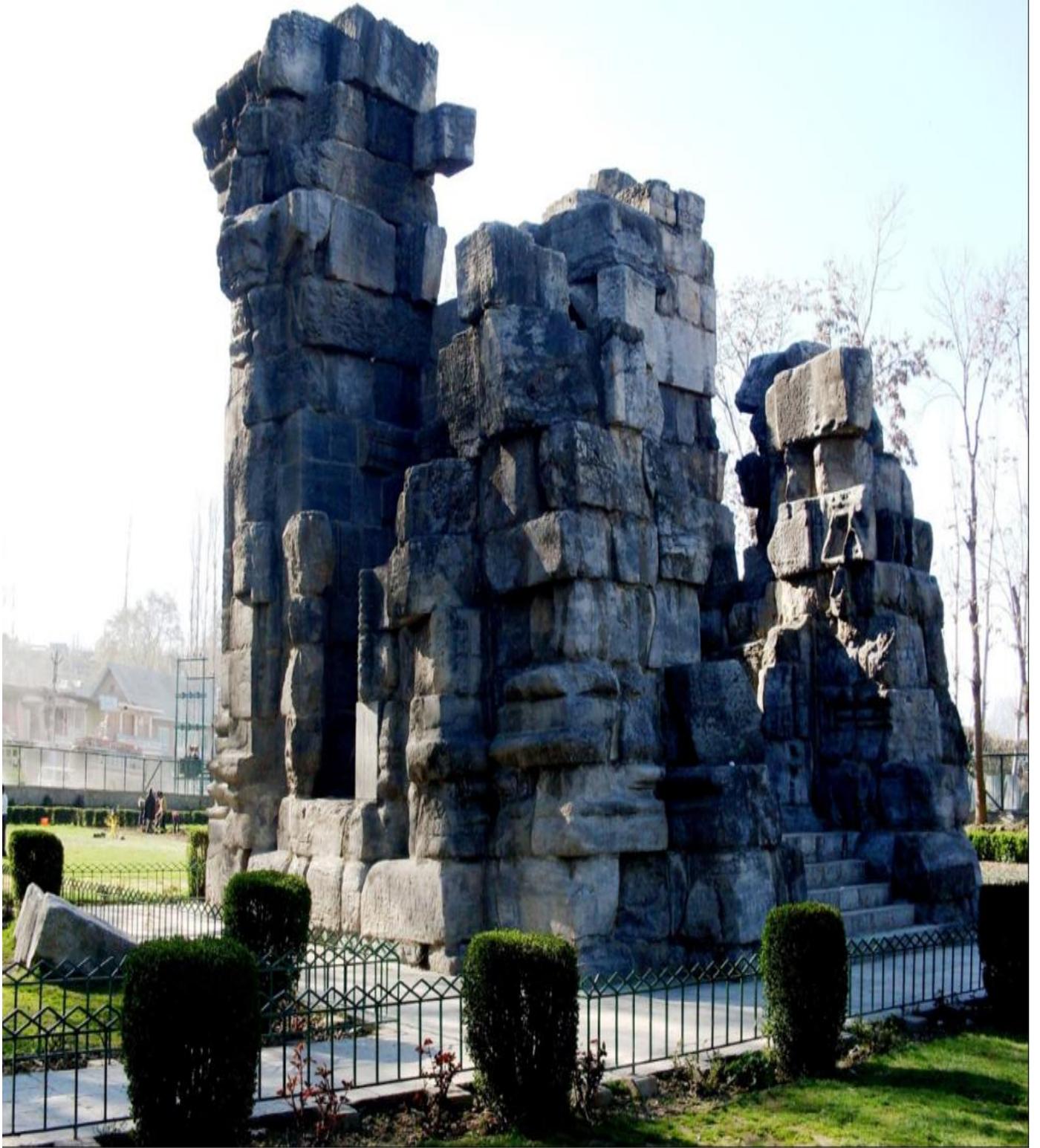
7) Shri Bhat also destroyed the famous temples of **Kamaraj**, which for example, included those of **Uttarasher** (sic), **Badakot**, **Kubisher** (sic), and **Gushi** Temple in the localities of **Kandi**, **Shaki Shiraz** (sic), **Kupwarah** and **Drang**. In the remote areas of the towns of **Sopore** and **Baramulla**, and in inner rural areas of Kamaraj, he pulled down all temples and built mosques in their place. The temples of **JattiRenu**, **Kandi Renu**, **BachhiRenu** in **Kamaraj** and **Satwal** temple in **Sopore** were all razed and destroyed[12].



Remains of Bhuniyar Temple destroyed by ShamsuddinAraqi

About the destruction of Buniyar, Dr.Mohan Lal Koul records

The lands belonging to the Brahmans from ages were suddenly confiscated and as a measure of coercion men associated with the maintenance and up-keep of temples were detained and arrested to break their allegiance to the Hindu places of worship. In the role of a model vandaliser Shams Iraqi vengefully plundered and destroyed the Vishnu temple, a marvel of Hindu architecture, at Buniyar in the district of Baramulla. He lavished personal care and attention in getting all the temples of Srinagar city looted, plundered and destroyed[13]



Ruins of Shankara Gaurisha Temple destroyed by Shamsuddin Araqi



Ruins of Sugandesha Temple in Pattan destroyed by ShamsuddinAraqi



Remains of old KotiTirtha Temple destroyed by the disciples of ShamsuddinAraqi

8) PanehRenu

Araki had built the Nurbakhshiyeh hospice (Khanqah) in the locality of Zadibal which had the huge **PanehRenu Temple** to its right. The temple had a spring skirted by tall firs and other trees. Araki wanted the temple to be destroyed and the trees felled and assigned the task to Hazrat Baba. A Mosque was built on the ruins[14].

9) Bhimasvamin (Bomeh Swami)

Since this big temple was situated close to the graveyards of the Sayyids and ShaykhBahauíd-Din, Araki believed that pulling it down and destroying it was incumbent upon Muslims. He personally supervised its demolition. A mosque was

constructed on it and a muézzin was appointed. This place was given to Malik RegiChak for burying the dead of his family and close relatives and friends[15].



Remains of Ganesha Bhimaswamin Temple destroyed by Shamsuddin Araki (pic courtesy : http://www.geocities.ws/san_rak2002/gan.index.html)

10) BakhiRenu in Udran (Doda)

When Araki and his men proceeded to demolish this temple, Hindus from the regions of Udran and Sipahiyan-e-Hind, took up bows, arrows and other arms and locked the idl-

razing Sufis into battle for several days. The Sufis were forced to retreat towards Zaldagar plains to protect Araki who was brought under security to the house of one AbdalMagray whose wife was the daughter of Malik Musa Raina (king's regent). Womenfolk and servants of the neighbouring Hindu household hurled garbage at the idol breaker sufis as they had deserted and demolished their temples. Musa Raina accompanied Araki on the mission of demolishing the temple and also asked his son Malik ěAli Raina to arrest the leading personalities among Hindus. Many of them were sent to prisons and many were banished to regions outside the valley. Even the smallest trace of the temple was effaced - stone-idols broken into pieces and crushed, wooden idols set on fire and the temple complex inundated. With not a trace of the temple left, a mosque was constructed on the site. Since this was the only place where Araki faced resistance to temple demolition , he compared it to a Jihad and he named it Islampor. A two-storey structure was raised here[16].

11) MankehRenu

This temple on the island of KolBlareh was demolished by Araki in person. He built a mosque on its foundation. Having done it, he left behind one of his dervishes for conducting five-time Muslim prayers and for giving call for prayers (azaan). JanakRenu The big JanakRenu temple stood towards the north of Idgah in a place known as ĩKalanvethĥ. Araki demolished it and built a mosque on the site. Orchards endowed to the temple were turned into melon and melons growing farms. A mulla with a couple of sentries was appointed to look after it[17].



Ancient Manasbal Temple destroyed by ShamsuddinAraqi

12) Vetalun

Situated near Rainawari, this well-known temple was visited by Jogis from all over India in large groups on pilgrimage. Araki came to this place and got it demolished and got a mosque built on its ruins/site. The ground lying all around the temple was cleared of dirt, and cells were erected on it.

13) Tashwan

The temple was destroyed and most of its big stones used for building the Zadibal hospice. Some of the stones retrieved from the destroyed temple were carried to Islampur for use in the hospice at that place. Some stones were used in the construction of a canal at the same place.

14) Udernat

This temple on an island of Dal was demolished by Araki and a mosque built on the ruins.

15) SadasMolo

This temple situated close to the Bazar-e Misgaran was demolished on Araki's orders. The site was levelled and a Mosque constructed. Araki bestowed his follower KhwajaTajuid-Din with the land and along with the mosque.

16) Modrenu

Gangabal was a very important pilgrimage for Hindus and it was considered very holy. Hindus from all over The people of India considered it as holy as the water of the Ganges. Anybody visiting Kashmir would visit the Sudarabal temple there and have a dip in the waters of its spring. Araki demolished this temple and built a mosque on its ruins. The temple lands were seized as endowment, and a mulla was appointed to conduct five-time congregational prayers according to Islamic tradition; its vineyard was given to be the property of the mosque. During the lifetime of Araki, Hindus could not go on the pilgrimage to Gangabal shrine.

17) Jogi Lankar

This LangarKhaneh (alms house) was located in the locality of Raenwor close to the waters of Dal Lake where Jogis and other Hindu pilgrims from all over India used to stay and pray. This was the base camp for pilgrimage to all temples in Kashmir. Araki tried to obtain permission from Sultan Fath Shah for its demolition who refused it citing its construction by his grandfather BudShah. Araki then got InrahimMagray the head of the justice department to issue a letter authorising its demolition. Araki took sufis along with him and engaged them in demolishing the structure. The site was levelled for the construction of a mosque and a prayer ground and a mosque was built there. While this was being done, local Hindus joined hands to confront the sufis and fight against them but they were defeated[18].

18) Pandrethen

Sikandar, the Iconoclast, had demolished this lofty and massive temple and brought stones from this very idol temple for use in Jamiia Mosque and the tombs of the Sultan(s). The temple was rebuilt and restored to its previous glory by Sultan Zainul-äAbidin. Araqi intended to have it demolished. An idol stood planted in the ground besides the building which Sikandar had not succeeded in breaking. It had been put to flames several times but in vain. It was pounded with iron rods and other strong metals but it did not break. Not a single limb of the statue could be broken. Araki tried hard to have it destroyed but it did not break. He then asked for the earth and stones underneath the idol be removed to make a deep crater. This and other statues were buried in the ditch and covered with earth and stones. Four cells were raised on each of

the four corners of the complex. The structure that was raised on the ruins of the demolished temple comprised of two floors[19].



Ruined temple at Pandrethan Destroyed by Sufi saint ShamsuddinAraqi



Excavated lingas at Pandrethan shrine destroyed by Araqi



A partially surviving image of Ganesha from Pandrethan Temple destroyed by Araqi



Mutilated idol of Kubera from Pandrethan shrine destroyed by Sufi saint ShamsuddinAraqi

19) Idol temple of Metna Spring

It was demolished and converted into a mosque. Not a trace of demolished temple was left behind. Kharboshtaz Temple He also demolished the temple of Kharboshtaz. This one was more popular than many other idol temples of Kashmir.

20) Ten temples demolished

The temples of **Jwalamukhi, Khodrenu, LankehRenu, BakhiRenu, LutiRenu, SonehRenu, Parzdan, Tsarenmal, Kupwur** and **Zachaldor** were demolished by Shamsuíd-Din and mosques were built at their site.

21) Sonwar Temple

A temple stood in the village called Sonwar. On the ruins of the (demolished) temple, a mosque was raised so that five-time a-day namaz (prayer) could be offered.



Mutilated idol from the remains of Temple at Sonwar destroyed by ShamsuddinAraqi

22) AdvinPargana

Temple It was demolished and a mosque was built at the site. Mullas were appointed to bring Islam to the place. They were taught the obligations of faith and Islam, namaz and ablution, etc.

23) Kalehbod Temple

This big temple was demolished and on its ruins a Jamiía mosque was built.

24) Narvora Temple

Araki demolished this temple that stood close to the spring in the village of NarvorNarwol and built a mosque on its ruins. A mulla was appointed to take care of it .

25) Vejnath Temple

This beautiful and artistic temple in the town of Vejehbrara (present day Bijbehara) with four rising pinnacles, was demolished by Sikandar the Iconoclast who got the pinnacles removed without causing them any damage. These were placed on four well-known structures in the city - Jamiía Masjid, thospice of Amir SayyidëAliHamadani, cupola of Sikandar's tomb, and his palace. The temple was restored to its earlier glory during the reign of Sultan Zainu'íl-íAbidin. Araki ensured that the foundations of the temple were demolished, and its stones were brought to the city, where these were used to build the boundary wall of the Hamadaniyyeh hospice. A mosque was raised in its place.



Mutilated image of Skanda from Bijbehara Shrine destroyed by Sufi saint ShamsuddinAraqi



Mutilated image of Uma Maheshwari from Bijbehara Shrine destroyed by ShamsuddinAraqi



26) Perzehyar Temple

It stood in the same locality (Vejehblareh/ Vejebror). It was also demolished and with that all traces of idol worshipping and polytheism and also the customs and shrines of the infidels were uprooted once for all.

27) Kuther Temple

A temple stood in Kuther by the side of the spring. Araki dispatched a group of sufis to demolish it. Arrangements were made for five-times congregational prayers in that mosque. A mulla was appointed to look after these duties.

28) Achhabal Temple

An idol temple stood in the village of Achhabal by the side of the source of water. It was annihilated, and a mosque was raised at the site. One of the Sufis named Mulla Shankar was appointed Imam to lead congregational prayers .



Ruins of temple at Martand (Achhabal) destroyed by Shamsuddin Araqi

29) Temples at Sagam and Lokeh (Bhavan)

Many temples stood in the villages of Sagam and Lokeh (Bhavan) by the side of the springs and away from these. These were annihilated and mosques in their place built. Mullas were appointed to conduct prayers.

30) Verinag Temple

The big temple which existed close to the spring in the village of Ver was demolished and a mosque was raised in its place. A Mulla was appointed to conduct prayers, give call for the prayer and deliver sermons. After the demolition of this temple, bands of dervishes and sufis came to every place in the village and along the road where there

were temples. They destroyed not only the temples of the infidels but also uprooted their customs and traditions. They wiped out all signs of idols and their remains so that the banner of Islamic religion and the shariía (law) began all over that region[20].



Remains of Verinag temple destroyed by ShamsuddinAraqi

Sufi lessons of 'Peace' and 'Tolerance' under ShamsuddinAraqi

Under ShamsuddinAraqi, Hindus of Kashmir had to physically bow to Muslims, failing which they were beaten to death. Just like Jews of Nazi Germany, HinduKafirs of Araqi's Kashmir were expected to dress distinctly from Muslims. Hindus were prohibited from wearing luxuries and had to present themselves deplorably. They were not supposed to ride horses - considered a prestigious animal in medieval ages! ***Tohafut-Al-Ahbab*** lists the following incident that recounts how a Hindu horseman was almost beaten to death by the Sufis when he failed to bow to Araqi

One day, Araki went for an excursion to the Koh-e-Maran to have a look at the melon farm. Suddenly there appeared a horse rider. He drew closer but did not offer obeisance to Araki, and did not show him any respect. Araki asked him the reason for not wishing him. A few sufis were present on the scene. They said that the horse rider

*was not a Muslim but an infidel wearing zunnar (ceremonial thread). Araki asked if he was a kafir (infidel), why did he ride like Muslims. Why is there no distinction between the dress he wore and those of Muslims..Araki ordered that the man be pulled down from his horse and taken into custody. **The sufis obeyed Araki and threw him down on the ground and thrashed him mercilessly, so much so that he lost the hope of survival**[21]*

This is how Araqi justified the above inhuman violence by Sufis :

The secretary was punished according to the sharia (religious law) of Mustafa (the Prophet). Why did he not wear the clothes of the infidels? The clothes he wore (of Muslims) were not permissible according to the religious law of the Messenger of God. I have, therefore, disciplined him and taught him a lesson[22]

To be continued...

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References

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- 2)Ibid pp.281
- 3)Rajatarangini(3.460)
- 4)MarkAurel Stein, Rajatarangini(3.460)
- 5)MarkAurel Stein, Rajatarangini(Book 2,Page 447)
- 6)Tohafut-Ul-Ahbab trans.. byKasinathPandita pp.218
- 7)Ibid PP.219
- 8)Ibid PP.220
- 9)Kalhana'sRajaratangini(1.121)
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- 11)Tohafut-Ul-Ahbab trans.. byKasinathPandita pp.221
- 12)Ibid PP.221
- 13)Wail of the Valley PP.31

14)Tohafut-Ul-Ahbab trans.. byKasinathPandita pp.226

15)Ibid PP.227

16)Ibid PP.242

17)Ibid PP.251

18)Ibid PP.255

19)Ibid PP.269

20)Ibid PP.277

21)Ibid PP.196

22)Ibid pp.197