

"ISLAM AND POLITICS IN CENTRAL ASIA"

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Submitted by
MS. NAUSHINA AFRIN ALI



**CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES DIVISION
CENTRE FOR SOUTH, CENTRAL, SOUTH EAST
ASIAN AND WEST PACIFIC STUDIES
JAWAHAR LAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110 067**

1998



जवाहर लाल नेहरू विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHAR LAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
New Delhi - 110 067

Central Asian Studies Division
Centre for South, Central, South East
Asian and West Pacific Studies

July 21, 1998

CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "ISLAM AND POLITICS IN CENTRAL ASIA" submitted by NAUSHINA AFRIN ALI in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY (M. Phil) of this university, is her original work. This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this or of any other university.

We recommend this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


Prof. I.N. Mukherjee


Chairperson
CHAIRPERSON

Centre for South, Central South East
Asia and South West Pac

School of International Studies

Jawahar Lal Nehru University

New Delhi - 110 067


Prof. K. Warikoo
Supervisor

*Dedicated
To My Parents
(with love and gratitude)*

Acknowledgment

In the completion of my dissertation, I am indebted to many. To my Supervisor Prof. K. Warikoo, who with utmost patience and painstakingly went through my drafts giving critical comments. He also allowed me to use his personal collection of books and journals for which I am very grateful to him. There will exist a perennial dearth of words to express my thanks, for his help guidance, cooperation and supervision, without which my dissertation would not have reached this stage.

My sincere thanks are due to the staff of Jawaharlal Nehru University Library New Delhi, Shastri Bhawan Library, New Delhi, UNESCO Library, Poorvi Marg, New Delhi and the staff of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti Bhawan, New Delhi; for their kind cooperation and help rendered to me for the location of various books and articles.

I acknowledge the help of Mr. S.A.M. Pasha, (Lecturer Political Science, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi) for giving me access to his personal materials.

I sincerely thanks Prof. Rahmatullah Khan (Rector, J.N.U., New Delhi) and Auntie for their constant encouragement and guidance.

To Sekhar goes my special thanks for being a very good friend to me. He's been a constant source of inspiration in each and every endeavour of mine. I have perennial dearth of words to thank Sekhar, for making himself available whenever

I needed him and also helping in the proof reading of my chapters despite his busy schedule. I am forever indebted to Sekhar for everything he has done for me.

To my friends, who inspired me to complete this work, I owe my sincere thanks.

My special thanks are due to Mr. Mohinder P. Singh and his prowess with the computer. I am grateful to Mohinder for working tirelessly and helping me meet my deadlines.

My sincere thanks are due to this temple of learning, ^{and} all my professors for enriching me with such a vast ocean of knowledge.

Last but not the least I express my heartfelt thanks to my loving parents from each breadth of mine. Though, no one can ever thank parents for whatever they have done for us because there will always remain a dearth of words. They have been a constant source of inspiration and appreciation for me in every thing I did. They were happy when I was happy and sad when I cried. Thank you Mummy, and Daddy I owe my thanks to my brother Ruana, sister Farzana, Ammi, Abba, Aunty and my mama, for their encouragement, help and prayers for me.

I thank all those who directly or indirectly helped me in the completion of this work.

New Delhi
21. July 1998


Naushina Afrin Ali

CONTENTS

	Page No.
Acknowledgement	
Preface to the work	
<i>Chapter 1.</i> Rise of Islam in Central Asia	1-22
<i>Chapter 2.</i> Islam Under Tsarist Rule	23-40
<i>Chapter 3.</i> Islam : Tradition and Practices	41-59
<i>Chapter 4.</i> Islam Under the Soviets	60-90
<i>Chapter 5.</i> Islamic Resurgence in Central Asia	91-119
Conclusion	120-126
Bibliography	127-134

PREFACE

Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan have predominantly Muslim population practising Sunni Islam of the Hanafi school. Islam is not new to the Central Asian people and politics. It emerged in Central Asia soon after the Arab conquest in the eighth century A.D. Islam holds a fascination for these people not just for religious reasons, but because it is a part of their historical and national identity. There are more than 60 million Muslims in Central Asia. Soon after their conquest by the Arab in seventh century, the oasis dwellers of Central Asia became the earliest converts to Islam. The Arab carried the new religion further to TransCaucasia, and by the eighth Century Daghestan was also covered. The ottoman compaigns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well as the strong Safavid influence throughout that period reinforced Islam in Central Asia.

The Russians who had established themselves in Central Asia by the late nineteenth century did not interfere in the religious affairs of the local Muslims. But they brought in certain changes in the traditional Muslim education by the introduction of modern Russian schools. Along with modern education, the Muslim religious teachings were also taught in these schools. Russians adopted this tolerant attitude towards the Muslims of Central Asia, as part of their tactical policy. During the Tsarist regime Muslims of Central Asia were

economically poor and deprived. The Muslims - Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Turkmen, Tatar, Ajerbaijanis, Bashkirs and many other nationalities, suffered not only social, but also national oppression. Nineteenth century Central Asia witnessed the rise of Jadidist (renewal) movement. The Jadidists were a group of Muslim intelligensia who believed in modern education, which according to them could bring about national consciousness among the peoples of Central Asia. But they were opposed by the traditional clerics (*mullahs*) who strictly believed in the *maktah* and *madrassah* system of education which taught about the Quran. Jadidism gave birth to the awakening of national self-determination of the Central Asian people, and imparted a distinct outlook in their political thinking. It made Islam a vital force, Young Muslims who graduated from revivalistic schools engaged themselves in the revival of Islam. Having survived the late nineteenth century tidal waves of the Tsars nearly intact, Central Asia became an ideological battle ground, where the Soviet authorities challenged Islam, and put to test their anti - religious strategies and tactics to spread their culture of atheism among the population.

Basmachi revolt, which began in 1917-18 and continued in Ferghana valley until 1928, was an organised armed resistance by the Muslims of Central Asia against the Soviets. Islam under the communist regime was put to severe tests. Lenin adopted the nationalities policy to dilute the challenge of Islam to the Soviet power in Central Asia. Stalin, followed a policy of assimilation, and a constitutional amendment of 1929 abolished the right to proselytise by any

religious establishment. After Stalin, Khrushchev came, who was fully aware of the persistence of religion. Khrushchev introduced economic rationalisation to further legitimise his anti-religious policy. The success of Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1979 put an end to a decade of relatively stable relations between the Soviet authorities and Islam. In the end Soviet policies could only curb the open prevalence and practice of Islamic rituals and not suppress Islam altogether.

Things gradually changed during the Gorbachev era, when 'glasnost' came in handy to the people of Central Asia for expression of their ethnic, linguistic, cultural, environmental and religious grievances, that had not been addressed openly before. And its by-product was the gradual revival of Islam in Central Asia. 'Official Islam' continued to play a significant role in shaping the ongoing Islamic revival.

Islamic beliefs and practices have played a very significant role in the lives of the people of Central Asia, thus making Sufism the most important religious order in Central Asia. The various Sufi missionaries were successful enough to preserve the Islamic traditions working underground during the communist regime in Central Asia. The Sufi movements which date from the eleventh century A.D. has a vast literature associated with some of the great Islamic theologians. Yasaviyya and Naqshbandiyya are some of the important Central Asian Sufi orders. Sufism became a vital force amongst the Sunni

Muslims of Central Asia. *Mazars* (*mausoleums*) of Saints (*Pir*) continue to be important places of pilgrimage for the Central Asian Muslims. These Shrines or Mazars are located throughout Central Asia. Though the Sufi orders were prohibited and persecuted by the Soviets, yet it were these very Sufi networks which worked underground to preserve the Islamic traditions and practice in Central Asia. These Sufi *tariqats* developed gradually into a powerful social and political force aptly described by Alexander Bennigsen as 'parallel Islam' as opposed to 'official Islam' allowed by the Soviets.

However, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the independence of Central Asian Republics, the Muslims of Central Asia are reasserting their ethnic, religious and cultural goals. Islam is seen as an important symbol of new national identity, along with ethnicity and language. The process of Islamic revivalism in Central Asia is an ongoing process with West Asian Muslim countries also assisting in this process. Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan have been in the forefront fuelling religious activities in Central Asia, including the construction of mosques, providing funds to *madrassahs*, publication of Islamic literature etc. Saudi Arabia has also given one million copies of the Quran to further strengthen Islamic revivalism in Central Asia. However, there is a grave concern in Central Asia over the negative and destabilising influence of Islamic fundamentalism. The experience of Afghanistan and Tajikistan, have helped in blunting the appeal of Islamic fundamentalist regimes and their politics in Central Asia.

This dissertation seeks to take up the issue of "Islam and Politics in Central Asia" keeping in view the various phases that Islam underwent in Central Asia under the Tsarist and the Soviet regimes, with particular reference to the prevalence of Islamic traditions and practices in this period. It also seeks to examine the transformation that Islam has undergone as a spiritual, social and political order, especially after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, in order to locate its present status and role in the Central Asian politics.

The study is divided into five chapters. First chapter, traces the advent of Islam in Central Asia during the eighth Century AD, the role played by the Khanates of Kokand, Khiva and Bukhara and also the impact of Russian expansionist policy on religion and polity in Central Asia.

Second chapter examines the status of Islam during the Tsarist rule and the role played by the *Jadidist* movement to revive Islam in Central Asia.

Third chapter deals with the rise of Sufi orders and various Islamic traditions and practices in Central Asia.

Fourth chapter discusses the various phases and changes in Islam under the Soviets with particular reference to the role of 'official Islam' and 'parallel Islam' in Central Asian society and polity.

Chapter five explores the prospects of Islamic resurgence in Central Asia after the independence of the Central Asian Republics and the role played by Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in the revival of Islam in Central Asia.

Main conclusions of this study are summarised in the last chapter.



Chapter 1
Rise of Islam in Central Asia

Prior to the advent of Islam in Central Asia during the eighth Century AD, there existed various religious beliefs with profound impact on the minds of the people. Buddhism and Manichaeism coexisted in Central Asia for a long time. Apart from these two faiths, Christianity was also existent in Central Asia. Buddhism could reach beyond the boundaries of India, due to the manifested efforts of the Maurya King Ashoka (268 B.C.). In the propagation of Buddhism and Indian culture in Central Asia, the Parthian, Saka and Kushan rulers of North Western India played an important role. The principal route of Buddhism lay through Bactria (now Uzbekistan and Tajikistan). Archaeological findings have revealed that Buddhism permeated every area of Central Asia leaving direct evidence in the form of inscriptions and religious structure. Buddhism ceased to play an important role in the region from the end of the eighth century A.D. after the arrival of Islam.¹

Manichaeism was also existent in Central Asia, their worship included prayers, the singing of hymns and preparation for the remission of sins. In the second half of the sixth century, the Central Asian Manichaean community led by Sha-Ohrmazd, declared its independence. It played an important role in the ideological life of Central Asia right up to the time of Arab conquest. The Arabs followed a very lenient attitude towards the Manichaeans and later allowed many of them to return to Iran and Mesopotamia.² Apart from these faiths, Christianity also existed in Central Asia. According to Al-Biruni, a

¹ B.A. Litvinsky (ed.), *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, vol.3, (France, 1996), pp. 417-28.

² *ibid.*, p. 417-66

Christian preacher appeared in Merv two hundred years after the birth of Christ. It was assumed that the large Christian community in Khurasan came into existence as early as 334 A.D. in Merv and in 430 A.D. in Herat. There is also some archaeological evidence to show that Christian communities existed in Merv and Southern Turkmenistan from the third to the sixth and seventh centuries. At some places in Merv, there are some Christian tombs and monasteries, ruins of which date back to the third century. Christianity which was prevalent among the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, had penetrated their society and further reached east upto the Kyrgyz tribe and also east Turkestan. Christian missionaries were sent during the fourth and fifth centuries, the period during which it appears that first Christian communities were found in Central Asia.³

Despite the fact that, Nestorianism, Manichaeism and Buddhism spread in the non-nomadic areas of Central Asia such as Tokharistan, Sogdiana, Khwarezm etc., most of the population continued to profess the local Iranian religion, which is often described as the Central Asian version of Zoroastrianism.⁴ The period from third to the eighth century was a time when artistic and intellectual life were highly developed in Central Asia. Several schools of paintings developed with profound Indian influence. Central Asia was also famed for its high level of music, dance and theatrical arts. Central Asians were known as excellent musicians. Monasteries were centres of learning and knowledge. Basic works of Buddhism, Manichaeism and Christianity were translated. The culture of this period was

³ ibid.

⁴ ibid.

the written culture. Another distinguishing feature of this period was that it was syncretic. Ideas, images and concepts were exchanged and there was intensive cultural exchange in all fields.⁵

But this period ended with an event of importance for world history-the rise of Islam and the Arab Caliphate and its extraordinary rapid expansion to the north, east and west. A sizeable part of Central Asia was incorporated into the Caliphate. The most important phenomenon of the history of Central Asia from the eighth to tenth century onwards was its gradual conversion to Islam, and its incorporation into the sphere of Islamic culture. The concept of Muslim religion and its ideology were widely disseminated and penetrated into various fields of intellectual and social life and material environment.⁶

ARAB CONQUEST OF CENTRAL ASIA

The scarcity of historical records which obscures the earlier history of Central Asia ends with the beginning of Arab invasion. The importance of Arab conquest and of the subsequent establishment of Islam first among the settled population and later among the nomads can hardly be over-estimated. The Arab conquest of the Persian Sasanian empire was achieved during the seventh century by the Omayyad Caliphate. The forces came from Khorasan, where an Arab Governorship had been set up with the town of Merv as its

⁵ Dilip Hiro., *Between Marx and Mohammed* (London, 1994) pp. 10-11.

⁶ Geoffrey Wheeler., *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*. (New York, 1964). pp.20-21.

centre. The first major raid into Transoxiana was carried out by the Governor of Khurasan when he crossed the Amu Darya and reached Bukhara, which at that time was ruled by a queen, Tughshada. From 676 AD to 680 AD, the Arabs made repeated raids in Khwarezm, Samarkand and Kokand, but every time peace was made once the rulers of the native area paid ransom to them.⁷ But at the end of the seventh century and beginning of the eighth century, the Arab policy towards Central Asia underwent a drastic change. The task of conquering Transoxiana was now entrusted to a new Governor of Khurasan, Qutaiba, who ushered in a new and decisive stage in the conquest of Transoxiana by the Umayyads. He exploited the internal quarrels between the rulers of Central Asia and undertook a bold campaign against Bukhara. The Arabs now launched a series of campaigns to capture various regions of Central Asia.⁸ Qutaiba consolidated his military victories by settling Arabs among the population and through them conducted large scale propaganda campaign for Islam. In order to attract people to Islam, the Arabs initially offered certain privileges to converts and applied coercion as well. Those who accepted Islam were exempted from payment of *Jaziya*. But when mass conversion began and tax receipts declined, the Governor of Khurasan issued a decree, exempting the new converts who accepted circumcision and acquainted themselves with Quran. from payment of *Jaziya*. This led to anti Umayyad movement of the Sogdians in the years 720-722.⁹ The Arabs dealt harshly with this movement and re-established their authority, which was short

⁷ *Encyclopaedia of Islam* : vol. 8, p. 683.

⁸ Litvinsky, n. 1, pp. 417-466.

⁹ *ibid.* pp. 447-466.

lived. The oasis of Bukhara became the centre of uprisings and attracted rebels from all over, and the Umayyads were driven out of Transoxiana. This situation was skilfully exploited by the Abbasids (descendants of the Uncle of Prophet Mohammed (PBH). But the Abbasids did very little to improve the general conditions of the people. The people arose again in discontent which finally led to the decline of the Abbasids. The people of Central Asia, never gave up their struggle until they had thrown off the rule of the Abbasids and set up their own independent state under the Samanids.¹⁰

The Arab conquest like all other conquest was responsible for death and destruction of urban life. Agriculture, art, and culture were ruined. Islam replaced the former local beliefs and cults as the official religion of Transoxiana. The population paid various types of taxes and carried out forced labour. However, the Arab conquest of Central Asia brought a large part of the East into contact with one another enabling them to develop economic and cultural exchanges. This paved the way for the subsequent development of culture under a new religious ideology, which influenced and determined private, public and state life. Relations between Muslims and the subject population of the Sasanian Empire were regulated by peace treaties.¹¹ The Arab conquest of Central Asia was completed towards the middle of the eighth century, but the adaptation of local populace to Islam, did not take place immediately. According to certain information available in the first half of the ninth century (Pahlavi scripts in Merv), Islam was actually

¹⁰ ibid. pp. 462-464.

¹¹ ibid. p. 466.

super-imposed on the Buddhist background. Even though Islam entered the life of the people of Central Asia, it was inter related with the pre-Islamic traditions and concepts which continued to dominate their life. There was a direct link between the Buddhist monastery and Islamic madrassah, mosques and mausoleums.¹² Buddhism also had certain influence on early Sufism and it did dominate individual's life.

RESPONSE OF CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLE TOWARDS ISLAM

The traditional religion of the great majority of the peoples of Central Asia is Islam, which has a long history in Central Asia. The oases dwellers of Central Asia were amongst the earliest converts to Islam adopting it in 622 AD.¹³ The Arabs fought a series of campaigns and their rule began in 652 AD. By the end of the eighth century Islam spread throughout the southern part of Central Asia. The early conversion to Islam of the Central Asian population may be adequately categorised into three phases.

The first phase began with the Arab conquest of the region under Usman in 649 AD and ended in 715 AD. The second phase, during which Islam was propagated by peaceful means followed during the middle of the tenth century and assumed dominant status among the religions of the region even though conversion to Islam continued as late as the nineteenth century. The environment which helped Islam to take deep roots was the geographic conditions of Central Asia, which had given birth to two rather distinct yet

¹² V. V. Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*. (Netherlands, 1977). vol. 2. p. 27.

¹³ Shirin Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of The Soviet Union*. (London, 1983) p. 4.

interactive societies - the sedentary populations of the oases of Merv, Bukhara, Balkh, Samarkand, Ferghana valley etc. and the nomadic population of the Steppe and its surrounding areas. The conversion to Islam was more effective in sedentary societies than the Steppe region. This was due to the enormous size and remoteness of Central Asia and lack of adequate military manpower which resulted in the political instability in the Arab Empire. There was also the lack of Islamic missionaries to spread Islam among the local population.¹⁴

The Arabs carried their conquest of Central Asia on two separate fronts, following the defeat of the Persian Royal army at the battle of Nahavand in 642 AD. Though the Persians offered resistance, the Arab armies proceeded from the northerly direction through Hamadan towards Khorasan. In order to strengthen Arab and Islamic hold on the region, fifty thousand families from Basra and Kufa were sent to colonise Khorasan. In order to avoid violence, many areas accepted the new faith. Heavy taxation was imposed on non-Muslims and thus in order to avoid taxation, conversion to Islamic faith was seen as safer recourse. Money (i.e. 2 dirhams) was given to people who offered Friday prayers at the mosques in Bukhara. By means of various methods the sedentary population was influenced by Islam.¹⁵

The second phase of conversion to Islam was made possible by the Muslim merchants and missionaries, who exposed the Central Asian population to Islam along the

¹⁴ Mehrdad Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia*. (New York, 1996) p. 73.

¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 75

trade routes especially the great Silk Road. From the ninth to the twelfth century, Islam made its lasting imprint on the sedentary population of Central Asia, not as a religious ideology, but as a way of life.¹⁶ Geoffrey Wheeler has indicated that "Islamic culture and civilisation were spread by Muslim traders, who during the eighth century penetrated as far as Khorezm and thence to the bank of Volga. These traders propagated Islam more as a way of life than a creed." He further pointed out that "in many parts of the Steppe region, where the Arabs never penetrated, Islamic canon law (*Shariah*) and Customary law (*adat*); and the limited use of Arabic script, came into vogue among peoples who still retained Shamanistic rites and religious belief."¹⁷ Barthold says that no direct propagation was carried out by Arab settlers and merchants.¹⁸ The conversion took place as a result of observation and casual contact with Arabs and the converted Iranians.

By the tenth century AD, the Central Asian oases of Bukhara and Samarkand had become the main centres of Islamic civilisation, which not only withstood but also later assimilated the various tribal conquerors of Turkish and Mongol origin throughout the next few centuries until the advent of Russian imperialism. The tribal population of the Steppe and surrounding areas were converted to Islam much later.¹⁹ Of the three main tribal regions of Central Asia, the southern section of the Kazakh Steppe (Chimkent), bordering the present day Uzbekistan was first exposed to Islam in the ninth century, which found its

¹⁶ ibid. p. 75.

¹⁷ Wheeler, n.6 pp. 185-186.

¹⁸ Haghyeghi, n. 14 p. 75.

¹⁹ ibid. p. 76.

way with relative ease. It was only in the early fourteenth century that Islam gained acceptance in the western, central and northern Steppe, first amongst the ruling elite who practised this faith and later among the segments of the tribal societies. The majority of the population showed superficial interest in Islam and remained attached to their tradition of Shamanism. In the fifteenth and the sixteenth century the third phase of conversion was carried out, which was done by Sufi missionaries of the *Yasavi* and *Naqshbandi* order. The Sufi movement played a vital role in the dissemination of Islam Merv and Bukhara emerged as leading centres of mysticism. Sufism became a part of the very fabric of life in Central Asia.²⁰

The Islamization of the Kyrgyz was carried out exclusively by the Sufi missionaries, who made their way to Kyrgyzstan through the Ferghana valley. The prominent Sufi orders which succeeded in these regions were the *Naqshbandi* from Bukhara, *Qadiri* from Ferghana valley and *Yasavi* from southern Kazakhstan. The Turkmen tribes were exposed to the Islamic faith between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries by the Sufi orders of *Yasavi*, *Qubrawi* and *Naqshbandi*. Bennigsen's characterisation of Turkmen Islam is more or less true of other tribal regions where the Shamanistic traditions were retained by the population long after Islam was accepted as the dominant religion in the region. Although the broad parameters of Islamic proclivity are defined by the sedentary versus tribal structural dichotomy of the Central Asian societies, within each of the five republics, there exists considerable regional diversity. Of

²⁰ Akiner., n. 13 .p p. 6-7.

all the Central Asian republics, Uzbekistan is more uniformly religious, than any other republic. Islamic culture has had the most profound impact on the population in Uzbekistan. The Ferghana Valley (especially the cities of Namangan and Andijan) is considered to be the bastion of Islamic activity in the whole of Central Asia.²¹

ROLE OF THE KHANATES

Prior to the Russian conquest there existed three Khanates on the territories of Central Asia. Bukhara in the basin of Zeravshan river and Khiva on the lower Amu Darya were older than Kokand, which came into existence towards the close of the eighteenth century.²² These Khanates existed even before the Arab conquest of Central Asia. Prior to the Mongol invasion of Central Asia, new architectural constructions, in the form of mosques, madrassahs appeared. From the seventh to the twelfth century no new construction took place. The name Khiva was first mentioned in the works of Arabs and Persian writers and scholar, Istakhri, Mukaddasi and *Khudud al-Alam* dating from the tenth century. Information about Khiva during the eighth century is not available because of ruthless destruction of cities and cultural movements during the Muslim invasion of Central Asia.²³

In the tenth century, Khiva became a part of the Samanid Empire. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Khiva was destroyed completely by the Mongol invaders. The

²¹ Haghyeghi., n.14 pp. 77-79.

²² Devendra Kaushik, *Central Asia in Modern Times*. (Moscow, 1970) p. 29

²³ *Khiva, The city of Thousand Domes*. (Paris Tashkent, 1997) p. 19

famous Sufi saint Sheikh Imam and founder of the order of *al-Kubraviya* known as Najim-ad-din Kubra died during the capture of Khorezm by the Mongols. In the fourteenth century, Khiva became a part of Amir Temur's empire. In the sixteenth century Khiva emerged as the main city of Khorezm and served as the capital of Khiva Khanate. It became a legitimate capital at the beginning of the seventeenth century, under Arab Muhammad (1602-1623). The role of Khiva became more prominent during the reign of Abdulgazi Bahadur Khan (son of Arab Muhammad) who undertook the construction of various *madrassahs* and bath houses. The second half of the seventeenth century was marked by political unity and improvement of the economy of Khiva.²⁴

During the eighteenth century the Khanate of Khiva was ruled by the family of Inak Iltuzer who has overthrown the Khans of the Genghis Khan dynasty in 1767. But during the Russian conquest of Central Asia in the late nineteenth century, Khiva was finally annexed into the Russian empire in 1873 AD.²⁵ In the late nineteenth century, things changed in Khiva due to the rise of Jadidist movement. The demand for literacy and secular education and science increased. The Russian teachers taught children arithmetic, Russian and world history. Muslim teachers taught the *maktab* program, which were operated at mosques, where Imam taught children. The beginning of the twentieth century marked the construction of various mosques and minarets. In Khiva alone, there were 120 *madrassahs* and 63 *Karkhanas*. Only boys studied at the *maktab* and

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 26.

²⁵ Mary Holdsworth, *Turkestan in the Nineteenth Century*. (London, 1959) p. 1

madrassahs. They were taught to read the Arabic alphabet and the Quran. In 1906 and 1911 two modern schools were opened in Khiva due to the influence of Jadidist Movement. Even after Russian conquest Khiva remained an unique city symbolising past history and present day vitality.²⁶

The Emirate of Bukhara was an ancient city for many centuries and was a centre of enlightenment and religion in the East. Throughout its history Bukhara was periodically invaded and plundered. Religion and secular sciences developed here, inspite of chaos during the early middle ages. Bukhara became a capital city for various empire like the Samanid Empire (9th and 10th century), Shabanid Empire (16th century), and Ashtrakhanid Empire (17th to 18th century). The first reference to Bukhara was mentioned by a Chinese writer in 630 AD. Between the first century BC and the first half of the fourth century AD, Bukhara oases was shared by two separate Kingdoms.²⁷

The Arab conquerors of Bukhara in the 8th Century plundered its wealth. In 713 AD a Christian Cathedral was replaced by Banu Khanzala, the first mosque that Muslims built in Bukhara.²⁸ In the late tenth to the early eleventh century Bukhara passed from hand to hand many times in the struggle between the Samanids and the Karakhanids. During the rule of the Karakhanids, the notable feature of this period was the increasing influence and might of the Muslim clergy, especially in Samarkand and Bukhara.²⁹ The

²⁶ n. 23 pp. 51-54.

²⁷ *Bukhara - An oriental Gem* (Paris, Tashkent, 1997), p. 31.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 38

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 42

influence of clergy which was very strong in Bukhara dominated both the political as well as religious life of the people. They possessed the lands of religious communities and organisation (waqfs), *madrassahs*, libraries and other buildings. The *Kuleldash Madrassah* in Bukhara owned property that had a total revenue of 150,000 tenga.³⁰ A huge mosque was built in Bukhara in 1069 AD.

However at the time of Mongol invasion, the mosque built in 1069 AD, the congregational mosque was sacked and many copies of Quran were scattered all over.³¹ The second half of the fourteenth century saw the rise of Amir Temur, who overcame the fierce resistance of the Mongols. Temur had respect for Bukhara and erected a mausoleum in 1383-84 AD on the site of an old Mazar or tomb.³² During the centuries of its existence Bukhara evolved through several stages of construction and reconstruction. From the time Islam consolidated its position in Central Asia, Muslim religious buildings were attached great importance and various mosques were constructed. In 771 AD the *Juma* (Friday) mosque was constructed. Three types of mosques were established in Bukhara. The *Juma Mosques* for Friday prayers, *Namazga country mosques* for the male folks to celebrate Muslim religious festivals and *Guzar* mosques for the daily prayers. Various *madrassahs* were built especially the *Khaniya* and *Masudiya madrassahs*. These *madrassahs* were mainly located in Samarkand.³³ The curriculum in the *madrassahs* at

³⁰ ibid., pp. 43-44

³¹ ibid., pp. 44-45

³² ibid., p. 50

³³ ibid., p. 84.

Bukhara comprised subjects such as Arabic, Morphology, logic, rhetoric, sciences in theological interpretation, rules of ablution, fasting, burial pilgrimage to Mecca, of purification, alms giving, regulation of buying and selling, marriage and divorce etc. Mathematics and literature could be studied outside the Madrassah.³⁴ Even under the Tsarist Russian rule, different works in Persian language was translated into Russian by the Russians. Various shops were selling number of Muslim books in Tashkent, Andizhan, Osh, Kokand and Namangan. Mary Barthold writes “although Turkestan as a whole had fallen to being one of the most backward places in the Muslim world, yet Bukhara had kept its tradition as a centre of theological culture.” In the eighteenth century the Emirate of Bukhara was ruled by the Mangit dynasty.³⁵ The Mangit dynasty had renewed the life of the Samarkand *madrassah* and new madrassahs were opened in Kokand and Andijhan. Theological studies were picking up in Bukhara and Samarkand.³⁶ Russian invasion of Bukhara took place in 1864-68, during which the religious activities were influenced by the clergy.

The Khanate of Kokand was culturally well embedded and various works on literature and poetry were carried on. But the Khanate of Kokand was completely defeated by the Russians during the year 1864-68.³⁷ The three Khanates of Central Asia were backward feudatories ruled by the Khans and Emirs and Islam was the main source

³⁴ Holdsworth, n. 25 p. 35.

³⁵ n 27 p. 84.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 37

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 1

of the political legitimisation.³⁸ The system of justice was based on (*Shariah*) Islamic laws and (*adat*) customary laws. But in reality the legal norms were not put into practice. A large majority of Central Asian population lived in villages and were exploited by the wealthy land lords, the (Begs, Bais and Bees). The rate of literacy was very low, as various educational institutions were run by Muslim clerics who discouraged any change in the forms of education. Even though changes were taking place all over in the field of science, technology, education etc., the Central Asian Muslims were not affected by any such changes. The economic condition of the people of this Khanate was also pathetic, as the lands were owned by Emirs or the Khans, the land lords (Begs, Beis and Bais) or the religious organisations (waqfs) which was mainly done to safeguard, the interest of the nobility and Muslim clergy. The condition of the peasantry became worse, especially after the Russian subjugation of the Khanate. The native rulers imposed various taxes on the peasantry because of their vassal status, unable to bear the heavy burden of taxation, various revolts either against the Tsars or against the native rulers took place.³⁹

ADVENT OF RUSSLANS

Former Soviet Central Asia called 'Middle Asia' and Kazakhstan' covers a land mass from the Caspian sea and Iran in the west and Afghanistan in the south, Siberia in the north, and Xinjiang province of China to the east. Russian attempts to establish relations with Central Asia were patronised by Peter the Great and the subsequent

³⁸ Shamsuddin- *Secularization in the USSR*. (New Delhi, 1983) p. 22.

³⁹ Wheeler, n.6 p. 50.

westernization of Russia. Increasing Russian interest in Central Asia was influenced by the passion to establish commercial relations with every possible country. The Russian expansionist policy towards Central Asia was guided mainly by economic and political interest.⁴⁰ Russian domination of the area came about in two stages, the capture of Kazakh Stepp and the conquest of the rest of the region during the period 1865-81.⁴¹ With the conquest of Astra-Khan Khanate in the second half of the sixteenth century, the Russians began to send feelers to the Kazakhs from the west and from the north.⁴²

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Kazakhs formed three hordes, the Small, Middle and Great horde, each horde being ruled by a Khan. Before the coming of Russians the gradual and somewhat haphazard inroads of Islam had very little effect on the social structure of the Kazakh or even on their legal system, which was borrowed from the Muslim customary law (adat). This gave additional authority to existing traditional customs and procedures particularly in respect of right to women.⁴³ The main impact of Islam among the Kazakhs was on their culture. However, Islam brought an art of writing and education which was based on the Arabic script and on the Persian and Arabic literature.⁴⁴ The three Khanates of Kokand Khiva and Bukhara divided among themselves the resources of the heartland of Central Asia. Though they were strong individually, their

⁴⁰ Michael Rywkin, *Moscows Muslim Challenge* (London, 1982) p. 3.

⁴¹ Hiro., n.5 pp. 1-2.

⁴² Wheeler, n.6 pp. 27-28.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 36

⁴⁴ Ahmad Hasan Dani., *New Light on Central Asia*, (New Delhi, 1993) p. 69.

position was weak, as a result of mutual conflict due to which they failed to meet the Russian challenge.⁴⁵

The Russian expansion into the Steppe region began in 1730AD, with the acceptance of Russian control by Abul Khair, the Khan of the Lesser Horde.⁴⁶ The rise of Russia is linked with the unification of the Russian state and the development of absolute monarchy with the centralised power located at Moscow.⁴⁷ The Russian advance went hand in hand with the consolidation of power in Moscow and further crystallisation of the Orthodox church. Full measures were taken to Russify the conquered territories and assimilate the population into Russian state. But the Tatar Muslims, resistance helped them to maintain their cultural identity. The Russians either by the policy of assimilation or by the migration of the Russian population in Central Asia occupied territories to make their position dominant.⁴⁸ The Russian advance in Central Asia began in the first half of the nineteenth century. The scholars believe that absence of any united resistance to Russian advance was due to the people accepting the Russians as their saviours, from the age long oppression of the tyrannical Muslim Khans and Amirs. One may look back at the Arab conquest of Central Asia, when there were mass conversions of the people towards Islam, either by coercion or by granting certain concessions. Russia was herself under the domination of Mongols for 250 years. After the collapse of the Mongolian empire, the

⁴⁵ Kaushik, n.22 p. 40.

⁴⁶ Dani., n. 43 p. 69.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

⁴⁸ Michael Rywkin., *Moscow's Muslim Challenge* (New York., London 1982), pp.39-40.

Tatar Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan were conquered by the Russians and became integral part of Russia.⁴⁹

Initially Russia was not keen in annexing various regions of Central Asia, but its interest developed during the second quarter of the nineteenth century owing to the economic, military and political importance of Central Asia and because of the colonial policies followed by Great Britain.⁵⁰ The defeat of Tsarist Russia in the Crimean war resulted in the transfer of Russian interest from the Balkans and the near east to the far east and Central Asia.⁵¹ The Russian captured various cities of Turkestan, Chimkent, Tashkent, Khodzent etc. The Russian advance of Central Asia, which began in 1839, and in course of less than half a century, it resulted in the reduction of Emirate of Bukhara and Khanate of Khiva to Vassal status and total annexation of the territories of the Khanate of Kokand.⁵² From 1864-68, two most important Central Asian Khanates of Kokand and Bukhara were completely defeated by the Russians. And in 1873, Khiva was also captured by the Russians.⁵³

Russia had a long history of interaction with the Muslims than any other European state. For over two hundred years, Moscow was ruled by Islamicized Mongol. From the middle of the sixteenth century, Tatar Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan were an integral part of Russia. From the eighteenth century, onwards, the frontiers of Russian state

⁴⁹ Wheeler., n. 6 pp. 42-43.

⁵⁰ Kaushik., n. 22 p.41.

⁵¹ Wheeler, n. 6 p. 43.

⁵² Kaushik, n. 22 pp. 45-46.

⁵³ Hayward and Fletcher, *Religion and the Soviet State* (London, 1969), p.192

marched with Turkey and Persia. But from the middle of the nineteenth century, Russian rule was paramount over the Muslim lands of Central Asia. All these circumstances would lead to believe that the attitude of Russians towards Islam was that of suspicion and aversion.⁵⁴

Things began to change under the Tsarist Russian rule in Central Asia after the emergence of the industrial economy. A new class of native proletariat emerged. Labour became cheap, and the economic and social position of the colonial rule underwent a marginal change.⁵⁵ Increasing interaction between the Russians and the native Central Asians led to a decline of religious fanaticism. During the end of the nineteenth century, though the Russian Christian Missionaries were preaching Christianity, the Muslims were left untouched and were given full freedom to practice and propagate their faith.⁵⁶ According to Curzon who visited Central Asia towards the end of the nineteenth century, "The Mullahs have been allowed to teach and preach the Quran, dervishes alone have been restrained in their fanatical importunities, mosques have been in some cases repaired by the Russian means; and at one time the government actually went so far to built itself".... Contrasting the educational policies of England and Russians towards their colonial subjects Curzon pointed out that "whereas England had recognised a special and primary obligation to shower the benefits of modern education, the Russians have proceeded upon very different lines. The educational habits and institutions of their

⁵⁴ Shams-ud-din., n. 37 p. 3.

⁵⁵ Wheeler - n. 6 p. 50.

⁵⁶ A. Bennigsen & C.L. Quelquejay, *Islam in Soviet Union* (London, 1967), p.15, Quoted.

Musalman subjects have been left untouched."⁵⁷ The judicial structure as mentioned earlier was based on Islamic canon laws and customary laws and the *Qazi*, the member of the religious elite manned it. The *Qazi* enjoyed a high social status and certain economic privileges as well. On the other hand the Muftis were the exponents of the Islamic *Shariah*. The Chief Mufti was the spiritual and legal head in the Khanates.⁵⁸ The *Imams* and the *mullahs* taught in traditional religious schools, i.e. the *maktah*, and the *madrassah*. The financial support to these schools came from Waqf lands. Apart from the *mullahs* and *Imams*, there were *dervishes* who taught or transmitted ascetic values. The pursuit of mundane non-religious and material gains was discouraged and a spirit of obedience to the authority was carefully cultivated. But after the Russian conquest of Central Asia there was an urge to change or reform the traditional system of education. There was the reopening of Russian schools, who not only taught modern education, but also had provision for Muslim religious teaching. This thus clearly indicates the tolerant attitude of Russians towards Islam.

But later on, the Russians changed their policy towards Islam, especially after the rise of Jadidist movement. *Maktahs* and *madrassahs* were recognised by the Russians and also the courses taught in the *madrassah* were included in the Russian system of modern education. Various Islamic laws were also recognised by the Russians. One most

⁵⁷ Shams-ud-din - n. 37 p. 36.

⁵⁸ Edward Allworth, *Soviet Nationality Problem*, (Columbia, 1971) p. 34.

important reason for the Russians to change their attitude towards Islam was the economic and strategic importance of the region.

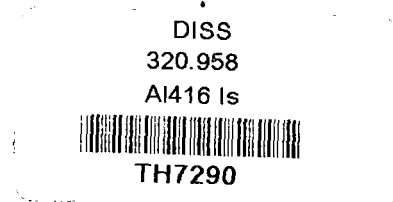
Thus to say, the imperial expansion of Russia which started in the middle of the sixteenth century, was the conquest of non - Christian nomadic societies and peoples who were socially and economically less complex than contemporary Russia. Some of the territories conquered by Russia such as Central Asia had a sedentary and established cultural history. Yet feeling of religious and cultural superiority on the part of Russians was quite strong. The Russians wooed the upper classes, heads of clans and families, former military leaders of the Khanates and converted them into instruments of Moscow's administrative and judicial control.⁵⁹ Before the revolution of 1917, for a very large proportion of Muslim life was still ordered by the customary law and not the Quranic law, and their religion was often a mixture of Islamic and different pre-Islamic beliefs. Even if Islam was the uniting bond, the social structure of the Muslim people was a strongly divisive factor, based on small patriarchal society. Islamic culture was not based entirely on Quranic precept nor in its persistence due to the conviction that Islam is the one true religion.⁶⁰ Its essence stemmed from the social and administrative systems introduced by the Arabs and the Persian conquerors from the eighth century onwards, which successfully outlasted the Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century.

TH-7290



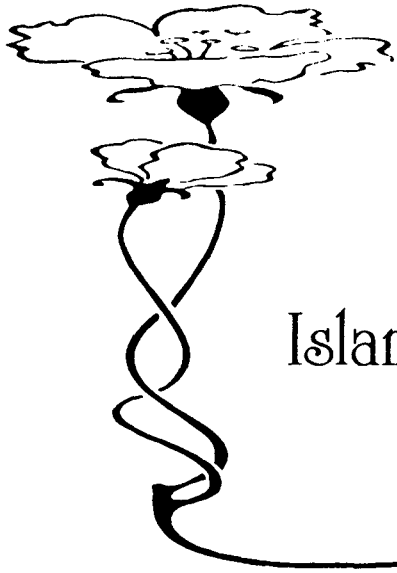
⁵⁹ ibid., p. 35.

⁶⁰ ibid., p. 35



Russia conferred great and substantial advantage upon the Central Asian regions, which she had reduced to her sway. The Russian policy towards the Muslims of Central Asia was a policy of Laissez Faire.⁶¹ The Mullahs were allowed to teach and preach Quran, the *dervishes* were in fact restrained because of their fanatical attitudes.

⁶¹ George H. Curzon, *Russia in Central Asia*, (London, 1889, 1967), p. 393.



Chapter 2
Islam Under Tsarist Rule

Tsarist colonial expansion into Asia, unlike English colonialism, never had to face the problem of very large number of natives to be subdued. Moscow was able to secure the areas it had conquered. Central Asia which was the last Tsarist colonial conquest was no exception.¹ Whereas Islam was the base of the socio-religious system in Central Asia after the conquest of the Arabs, the ethnic composition of the populace was mainly Turkic. During the century and a half which ended with the battle of Goek Tepe in 1881, Russia had acquired a vast territory. In the Steppe region the Russian advance was very slow. But once Tashkent was annexed in 1865, the power and influence of the Khanates of Kokand, Khiva and Bukhara declined rapidly.²

Tsarist policy in Central Asia was calculated to ensure continued domination by maintaining peace and order in the area and interfering as little as possible with the native customs and way of life. Even Russian urban settlements were kept separate. The Russian presence in Central Asia was marked by three developments.. Firstly there was cotton boom in Turkestan. Secondly there was enough 'surplus land' available in the Kazakh Steppe and in Kirghizia for cultivation and settlement. Thirdly Central Asia became the new

¹ Ahmad Hasan Dani : *New Light on Central Asia*, (Delhi, 1993). p. 60.
² Geoffrey Wheeler: *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, (London, 1964), p. 65.

market for Russian manufactured goods. The trade between Russia and Central Asia shifted from the hands of previously favoured Muslim merchants to the newly privileged Russian who dominated the market.³ The Tsarist policy especially the economic policy towards the Central Asian population was discriminatory as compared to the treatment rendered to the new settlers. The Russian settlers were given concessions to carry out different economic activities, but this was not so in the case of the native Central Asian population. This therefore resulted in a revolt in Kazakhstan under the leadership of Amangeldy Imanov.⁴ The revolt spread to various places including Samarkand and the Ferghana valley. But the revolt was crushed by the Russian troops.

It was only after the 1905 Revolution that Muslim nationalist movements that stemmed from the Tatar and the Azeri Turks began to surface in Turkestan and in the Kazakh Steppe. The leaders of this movement known as the Jadidists set up their first political organisation in Bukhara in 1909. Anti-Russian in their attitude and looking to the "Young Turks" of the Ottoman Empire for inspiration, the Jadidists resembled the "Muslim socialists". Since in the Steppe region the attitude of the people was less anti-Russian, more pro-western and liberal than socialist politically. In 1912, jadidists made little impact there. The

³ Michael Rywkin- *Moscow's Muslim Challenge* (London, 1982). p. 14.

⁴ *ibid.*, p.17.

Kazakhs formed the *Alash Orda* Party, which was to co-operate with the Russian liberal bourgeoisie.⁵

The Tsarist conquest, annexation and administration of the Steppe region and Turkestan constituted the first phase of Russian domination of the whole region. Apart from a few vestiges of Shamanism among the nomads, religious beliefs and practices among the people of Central Asia have, since the Arab conquest in the eighth century remained confined to Islam. Islam was unquestionably the most durable cultural influence to have taken roots in Central Asia. Islam before the coming of Russians not only survived, but was also embraced by many non-Muslim invaders. Only a small proportion of the upper classes was affected by the Russian culture during the Tsarist regime, who feared and hated Islam, but still adopted a fairly tolerant attitude towards it. Even the openly hostile attitude of later Soviet regimes towards Islamic creed and way of life by no means eradicated Islamic influence in Central Asia.⁶

The policy of Tsarist regime towards Islam was inconsistent and confused. During the early stages of Russian advance into the Steppe region in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Russian government regarded Islam as a stabilising and pacifying influence. Accordingly, the Russians had

⁵ ibid., p. 18.

⁶ Wheeler, n. 2 p. 185.

even ordered for the building of mosques in the Kazakh Steppe. But later on when the authorities realised the extent to which Islam was deep rooted in the society especially in judicial and agrarian systems, they began to regard the Muslim clergy especially the *Qazi* (i.e. the administrator of the *Shariah*) or canon law with strong disfavour.⁷ General Kaufman looked at Islam as a baneful and dangerous influence and believed that it could be easily countered by the policy of indifference. Kaufman did not advocate any interference with religious observance, educational or legal system except in the system of taxation. But Kaufman took all possible steps to minimize the authority of the *Qazi*, or the supreme judge. He later on abolished this office and believed Islam would wither away. Kaufman's successors made an attempt to know more about Islam and particularly the customary law (*adat*). But Islamic influence went on increasing, with each steps the Russian regime took to counter it. The propagation of Islam among the nomads by the *Ishans* (religious leaders) from Bukhara, Samarkand, Kokand and Tashkent increased since the pacification of Central Asia.⁸

Various steps were taken in the form of codification of the *Shariat* in 1908-9, but the result was unworkable. The Russian Revolution which was

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 186.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 187.

preceded by the Revolt of 1916, aroused Muslim religious fanaticism which was directed against Russians.⁹ As a religion, Islam came under the general fire directed against supernatural beliefs, except like communism. Islam believed in universality. Communism regarded Islam as infinitely more pernicious and objectionable than any branch of Christianity. It saw Islam to be going backwards especially the veiling of women, pilgrimages to holy places and tombs, Islamic festivals, practices of circumusion which interrupted work thereby impeding the process of development.¹⁰

Although the foregoing facts give us some idea about the actual fabric of Islam during the Tsarist Russian period, these do not reflect as to what extent Islam remained a living force among the people. In spite of Islam being suppressed during the Tsarist regime, the majority of the Central Asian population would openly profess Islam and claim themselves to be Muslims.

The Tsarist policy in Central Asia was more subtle than portrayed by western scholars. It was based on the self-enlightened interest of the imperial regime. Fearful of the strong reaction of the traditional religious elite, the Tsarist administration did not interfere in the functioning of the cultural-religious institutions of the natives. Even the traditional courts of the Qazi's

⁹ ibid., p. 188.

¹⁰ ibid., pp. 189-90.

were allowed to operate. but their position reduced with the creation of the Russian judicial system. The main motive of Tsarist policy was to prevent the penetration of current religious political ideas from the neighbouring Muslim countries. As far as the educational development was concerned, it was believed that the natives in course of time would realise the importance of modern education.¹¹

RISE OF JADIDIST MOVEMENT IN TSARIST RUSSIA

The movement for socio-cultural change was initiated by a small section of intelligentsia. The first Russian modern school opened in Samarkand in 1870, but it did not attract many students, as the natives suspected it to be the centre of proselytisation and Russification.¹² But gradually the native Central Asians started opening schools on the pattern of western system of education. Besides modern subjects, there was provision for Muslim religious teachings in their curricula. This was thus a beginning towards a partial modernization of Central Asian Muslim culture.¹³ On the eve of the October revolution, the number of these modern schools increased to more than one hundred and fifty and nearly 18000 students received education.¹⁴

¹¹ Shams-ud-din., *Secularization in the USSR* (New Delhi, 1982) p.33.

¹² V.V. Barthold Works Four *Studies on the History of Central Asia* vol. 2, part I, pp. 299-304.

¹³ Shams-ud-din n. 11 pp. 37-38.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 38.

was anti-democratic and revivalist in nature. It was believed that in the name of religion, the *Qadimists* catered to their own vested interests. Until 1917, the *Qadimist* movement remained an anti-colonial movement and under the influence of these groups various groups in rural areas organized many revolts against the Russians, which were brutally suppressed.¹⁷

Initially the Tsarist administration and the *Qadimists* strided along two parallel paths. But after the consolidation of the colonial administration, the Tsarist regime supported the *Qadimists* against the bourgeoisie reformist movement known as *Jadidism*. The influence of the *Qadimists* among the population was widespread. To further strengthen their position, the *Qadimists* laid the foundation of an organisation of Jamait-i-Ulema in April 1917. This Jamait-i-Ulema participated in the deliberations of All Russian Muslim Congress as an attempt to disrupt and block the programmes of the Jadidists.¹⁸

JADIDIST MOVEMENT

Central Asia which became a Tsarist Russian colony, was used as a market for the industrial goods of the Russians and the raw materials which came out of the agricultural produce became an import source material for the

¹⁷ Shams-ud-din., n.11 p. 38.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 39.

industries in the Russian territory. The Tsarist policy was geared to ensure the political isolation of the region from the rest of the world. Tashkent was made the centre of Turkestan governorate. The most important measure undertaken by the Tsarists was the control over educational institutions and an attempt to transform the old educational system. People learnt Russian for the sake of convenience, but the imposition of Russian culture on the people of Central Asia did not lead to any modernization.¹⁹ Although the Central Asian polity was dominated by traditional ideas based on religion, but things gradually began to change especially after the Tsarist Russian conquest of Central Asia. In the nineteenth Century, it was observed that the society was based on two different ideologies. The *traditionalists* who were opposed to any change in the theory and practice of Islam, and the forms of education, whereas the *modernists*, were for change in the same. They wanted to revise the old attitudes of religion and wanted that religion should adapt to changing circumstances and conditions of contemporary life. With the modernists grew the ideas of nationalism based on democratic values and national self-consciousness. The modernists though influenced by religion, wanted a separate identity for the people of Central Asia. They had an urgent quest for freedom from the foreign rule. They started demanding more autonomy for the Muslims in the political, economic and

¹⁹ Dani, n. 1. p. 74.

cultural fields.²⁰ These modernists whose rise was witnessed in the nineteenth century were known as the Jadidists.

The founder of the Jadidist movement was Ismail Bey Gasprinsky (1851-1914) who was a Tatar by birth. Gasprinsky was educated both at Crimea and Moscow. The Jadidist movement which was born in Crimea in Russia, comprised of the Muslim community who were more educated and well informed than other sections of the Muslims residing in different areas. Gasprinsky gave a slogan "unity of thought and action". His ideas were presented in the newspaper *Terjuman* (Interpreter) founded in 1833. The idea or the central message of the newspaper focussed on the imperative of Islamic updating and renewal of the Muslim communities in order to find an honourable place in the Russian Empire.²¹ Thus the Jadidist Movement was a movement for renewal or renovation of the old order.

The inspiration behind the Jadidist movement came from Jamaluddin Afghani (1838-1897) and his Egyptian disciples, who led a movement to modernize the system of religious education and defended the idea that the "gate of *ijtihad*" (exercise of independent judgement) is open for renovations which

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 86.

²¹ Hafeez Malik - *Central Asia - Its Strategic Importance and future prospects.* (New York, 1994), p. 68.

helps the Muslims to solve the problem of the umma. While attempting to bring about changes in the educational system and accepting the basic Islamic values these modernists declared national independence as their main objective. Their ideas inspired various movements in Egypt i.e. *Ikhwan-al-Muslimyn* (Movement of Muslim Brotherhood) and *Jamat-i-Islami* in Pakistan.²² The Jadidist movement was launched as an opposition to the Qadimists or the traditional religious elite. This movement is was mainly led by a group of intellectuals, who perceived that the opposition to the new socio-political developments in Russian Central Asia was futile, so they urged for certain changes in the traditional methods of education.

Origin of the Jadidist movement can be traced to the realization that *madrassah* educational system in Central Asia was decadent. From the end of the nineteenth century, the Tatars, who were the most dynamic were among those affected by a new awakening, had given priority to the educational problems, starting with a drastic reform of the *maktabs*. Gasprinsky opened a reformed *maktah* at Samarkand with the help of a Tatar merchant Husaynov.²³ The new or the reformed *maktabs* were opened at a time when the Russian-Vernacular schools were being developed. During 1905, the *maktabs* were few

²² *ibid.*, p. 68.

²³ Dani - n.1 p. 86.

in number, but then their numbers increased with the increase in popularity. The new *maktabs* gave severe competition to the traditional schools or *maktabs*.²⁴ The *Jadidists* stressed that apart from teaching of Quran, calligraphy, *hadith* and Arabic, the *maktabs* should also teach geography, arithmetic and science.²⁵ Thus would bring awareness and consciousness amongst the Muslims and thus regenerate a new Muslim. By 1916 in Tatarstan, there were more than a dozen *Jadid Maktabs*. And by the time of the Russian revolution in 1917, there were more than five thousand. *Jadidist* schools, that were established in Muslim Central Asia.²⁶ The *Jadidists* urged for an adoption of comprehensive school curriculum and their advocacy of the phonetical method of study, which brought them the appellation "*Jadidists*" meaning the adherents of a new method of study.²⁷ As their attempt to persuade the authorities of the old maktab and madrassah to switch over to phonetical methods of study failed, they started opening schools established on the new methods in various parts of Central Asia.

The *Jadidist* movement, however, did not remain confined to the educational and cultural activities. It also started exercising influence on the

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 89.

²⁵ Malik, n. 21 p. 69.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 69.

²⁷ Vaidyanath n. 15 p. 55.

political development in Central Asia. The supporters of the *Jadidist* movement, emphasized the necessity of gaining the experience of European peoples and also of sending the people of Central Asia to developed countries, for learning the depth of their economy, commerce and culture and at the same time preserving their own religious and national values. The *Jadidists* believed that all these activities would finally lead to the awakening of the people from the ageold suppression of the Russian Tsarist rule, and would also make it possible for them to gain national independence. They were inspired by the ideals of national liberation through modern educational achievement and self determination. *Jadidist* movement initially was very popular amongst the intelligentsia of Central Asia, but it gradually attracted rich merchants from Uzbekistan, who supported this movement financially especially the various books and journals published by the *Jadidists*.²⁸ An All Russian Muslims Congress was held in August 1905, which decided to organize an all Russian Muslim Union Party and adopted a five point resolution. It urged for the unification of all Muslims to carry out certain social, political and economic reforms, for the legal equality of Muslims and Russian population, for establishment of a constitutional monarchy based on proportional representation of nationalities, for freedom of press, convention and religion it also demanded

²⁸ Malik, n. 21 p. 70.

that peasants with little or no land be provided land by the state and crown's holdings.²⁹ There were two more Muslims Congresses, one held in January 1906 in St. Petersburg and the third one in August 1906.³⁰ But these Congresses offered little or no change. The Muslims were alienated and discriminated in all walks of life. The Jadidists finally participated in the October Revolution of 1917 and left a profound impact on the Central Asian polity and society. The *Jadidist* movement affected the Khanate of Khiva and Emirate of Bukhara, where traditional Islam had fortified itself and continued to exercise its influence among the ruling junta. But now the society received a jolt by the *Jadidists*, whose activities led to the rise of 'Young Khivans and Young Bukharans.' Their main aim being putting an end on the outmoded government, end their atrocities and participate fully with the revolutionary movements.³¹ During the first decade of the Soviet rule, all the *Jadidist* activists were executed. The death of various *Jadidists* does not however, means that the movement was defeated. This movement gave birth to the awakening of national self-determination of the Central Asian people. It gave them modern education and its also brought about a positive change in their political attitude. It was in fact a step forward towards the national liberation of the Central Asian people. In the religious field also,

²⁹ Shams-ud-din., n. 11 pp. 39-40.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 40.

³¹ Dani, n. 1 pp. 87-88.

there were many positive achievements, i.e. the modernization of attitudes, renewal or renovation of past practices, and the adaptation of Islam to modern conditions. Thus *Jadidism* made Islam a vital force in Central Asian society and polity.³²

The *Jadidist* movement which was spread by the Tatar missionaries in various parts of Central Asia was divided into two groups i.e. Bukharan and Turkestan Movement. However the *Jadid* movement was less successful in Bukhara than in Turkestan, as in Bukhara the political system was less open and averse to changes. But the *Jadidist* movement left a profound impact on the people and the local intelligensia.³³ Even though the *Jadidists* were opposed by the *Qadimists* as well as by the colonial administration, the contribution of the *Jadidists* to the modernisation of the traditional educational system cannot be ignored or minimized. The foundation of secularization of native educational system and culture had been laid by the *Jadidists*. The political ideology of the *Jadidists* was based on the reformation of traditional religion. They basically worked for the syncretisation of the new and the old values. They sought to absorb certain traits of modernity while glorifying the virtues of Islam.³⁴ The

³² Malik, n. 21 p. 71.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 69.

³⁴ Shams-ud-din, n. 11 pp. 39-40.

Tsarist colonial administration was against the propagation and functioning of the political organisation of the *Jadidists*, therefore the *Jadidists* propagated their political ideals under the garb of a cultural organisation.³⁵

The reformist programme of the *Jadidists* was meant for a small group of the Central Asian middle class. Like the *Qadimists*, they also used religious and cultural symbols to mobilize the illiterate masses.³⁶ They no doubt failed but, the *Jadidists* were successful enough in providing modern education to the people and also showing them the path of social progress. Under the influence of the *Jadidist* ideology, people questioned their blind loyalties to the rulers and their right to rule. In spite of the limited gains of the *Jadidists*, they were heralds of a new age in Central Asia.³⁷

This new movement came as a cultural awakening to the people of Central Asia. By 1917, the total number of new or modern schools in Turkestan arose to 92. This new development even though important, was not able to change the old cultural and educational system, in Turkestan. The old *maktabs* and *madrasahs* still continued to play a very important role and their number was gradually on the rise. For example there were 11 old *madrasahs* in 1876

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 40.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 44.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 45.

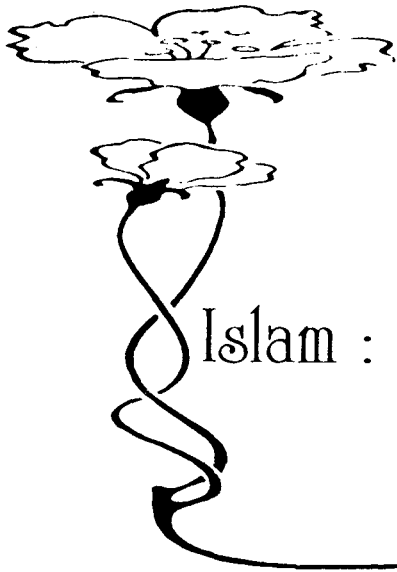
in Tashkent and their numbers increased to 22 in 1910. The total number of *madrassahs* in the three oblasts in Turkestan grew from 313 in 1900 to 328 in 1911. The total number of old *maktabs* and *madrassahs* increased from 6,445 in 1894 to 7,665 in 1913.³⁸

Jadidism under the Tsarist and the Russian regime was a modest yet a strong attempt aimed at challenging the traditional religious elite, traditional system of education, culture, social and political processes etc. As the *Qadimists* or the traditional religious elite had a strong base it never allowed the *Jadidists* to get strong foothold in Central Asia. The *Jadidists* were also opposed by the Russian and the Tsarist regime, as they were successful in bringing about a strong feeling of national consciousness which in turn increased the urge towards national independence or national self determination. The *Jadidists* also participated in the revolutionary movements and laid the foundation for the social progress of the people of Central Asia. The main motive of the *Jadidists* was to bring about a national reawakening in the minds of the people, which they thought could be achieved only if the people are acquainted with the modern education.

³⁸ Devendra Kaushik, *Central Asia in Modern Times*, (Moscow, 1970) p.76

To conclude, the *Jadidist* movement which was aimed to modernize the teachings of Islam and to rid Islam of its archaic dimension was suppressed by the Russians as it directly threatened their position in the society. The Russian Tsars supported the traditional clergy, which was also against any reforms in the present order. The *Jadidists* of Central Asia, who were despised by the Russians lent their support to the Bolsheviks during and after the October revolution.³⁹ The *Jadidist* reformers attended more to the cultural and social aspects of Islam, than to its spiritual and doctrinal side. The movement was mainly aimed at purifying rather than destroying Islam, as was claimed by the traditionalists. *Jadidism* stood, against the outward trap of pan Islamism, obscurantism, and the low status of women. The Tsarist approach to Islam in Central Asia was vacillating and inconsistent. Until, the 1880s it was believed that contact with 'superior' Russian culture would result in the eventual dying of the faith. Therefore, no positive steps were taken to restrict the practice of religion or religious instructions in the schools. After the Andijan revolt of 1898 and the rise of *Jadidism* at the turn of the century, the Russians adopted a completely different approach towards Islam.

³⁹ Mehrdad Haghayeghi., *Islam and Politics in Central Asia*, (New York, 1996). p. 9.



Chapter 3

Islam : Tradition and Practices

Any commentary on Islam will explain, that being Muslim means submission to the will of god. Islam as a doctrine has immensely influenced people's mind and heart. The holy Quran is the basis of Islamic doctrine, cult and wisdom. Islam is not only a religion but also a way of life, for millions of people across the globe. In the erstwhile Central Asian republics of Soviet Union, Islam has been the dominant religion, professed by many millions of people. The bulk of the Muslims in Central Asia profess the Islam of the Hanafite School of the Sunni faith, but there are also Shafi'ites in the northern Caucasus, Shi'ites in Trans-Caucasia and Ismailis in the Pamirs.¹

Islam is established on five principles, viz professing that there is no other god but Allah and Muhammad (PBH) is his prophet, performance of prayers, payment of *Zakat* (Alms), fasting during Holy the month of Ramadhan and pilgrimage to Mecca for those who are able to do so. Islam is a prophetic religion. It is based upon the revelation of the word of God, made to a mortal, the prophet of God, and then transmitted to his followers.²

Just as other religions have sects within themselves, Islam too has a number of divisions which are often at war with each other. Of these the

¹ Mehdad Hagayeghi., *Islam and Poltics in Central Asia* (NewYork, 1996). p. 80.

² Alexander Bennigsen. "Islam in Retrospect" *Central Asian Survey* vol. 8, No. 1. p.89.

divisions between Shiites and Sunnites is of relevance to Central Asia. The Islamic law or *Shariah* is considered to be sacrosanct.³ One of the key doctrines of the Shiites not shared by Muslims of other sects is the belief in an Imam. The specific difference between the two sects, Sunnis and Shiites lies in the practical aspect with regard to *Sunna*, which is the basis of universal orthodox Islamic creed and practice. *Sunna* is basically a body of traditions based on the example of Prophet Muhammad (PBH) in the Quran and which are written in *Hadith*, books of traditions. Apart from this, there are two more Islamic doctrines, the first *Shariat*, which is the supreme law and second is the *Adat*, which is the local customary practice among the various Islamic peoples. These two concepts are usually opposed to each other. Messianism is a fundamental character of Islamic cult and doctrine. Both Sunni and Shia share the faith in the Messiah or the preacher of the true faith.⁴ Central Asian Republics present a comprehensive case so far as the practice of Sufism and Islamic traditions and practices, is concerned owing to its heavy Muslim population. Another source of conflict between the two communities Shia and Sunnis in Central Asia is attributed to the political rivalries of the Ottomans and Safavids.

³ L. Krader., *Peoples of Central Asia* (Hague, 1966) p. 120.

⁴ *ibid.* pp.121-122.

Another notable sect of Islam in Central Asia is the Ismailites, a branch of Shiites, whose history goes back to the eighth Century. They are an "Imamist" group, like the rest of the Shiites. They differ from the other Shiites as they believe in the existence of only seven Imams. They believe that after the seventh Imam, in the eighth century, no Imam has even appeared in public.⁵

Muslim of the Central Asian republics have adhered to the Islamic practices. The Muslims combine the services of Allah and the observance of Islamic religious rites with due and conscientious fulfillment of the social obligations. There is a symbiosis between the national and the religious that is accepted as a fact by both Muslims and settlers. This national religious relationship thus comes full circle. For all Muslims and those raised according to Islamic cult or tradition in Central Asia, the family is a central social unit.⁶

Central Asian Republics with an estimated Muslim population of more than 60 million people are predominantly Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi School. There are also Sunni Muslims who adhere to Sufism common to all Republics, but most prevalent in Turkmenistan.⁷ The Hanafi school, from where it reached Central Asia through the medium of Arabs was founded by Abu

⁵ ibid., pp. 122-123

⁶ ibid., p.123.

⁷ Haghayeghi., n.1. p.80.

Hanifah al Numan ibn Zuta ib Mah (d. 767) in Kufa. (Basra) It wielded considerable political influence in Bukhara from the eleventh century until well into the Mongol era. Hanafi principles have been instrumental in providing a flexible framework for the practice of Islam, offering more freedom to the believers. The *first* distinction has been made between faith (*Iman*) and work or practice (*amal*). They argue that if a Muslim whole heartedly believes in God and the prophet hood of Muhammad (PBH), but is negligent in performing his religions duties, he is not an infidel. *Second*, the Hanafi place heavy emphasis upon the expediency and the beneficiality of Islamic jurisprudence, and refraining from the so called deviational interpretation of Islam. *Third*, the role of private opinion (*rai*), analogy (*qiyas*), critical scrutiny (*derayat*) and public consensus (*jima*) in administration and interpretation of Islamic principles have been stressed. *Fourth*, Hanafi school is more tolerant towards matters concerning civil and criminal punishment, divorce and alms giving.⁸

In addition to the dominant Hanafi doctrines and Sufi orders, the Shiites sects have been represented in several Central Asian locations. The Ismaili Shiites are found in the Gorno Badakshan of the Pamir mountainous region in south-eastern Tajikistan. The origin of Ismailis can be traced back to the rise of

⁸ ibid., p.81.

Hassan-e-Sabbah who defected from the Fatimid Ismailis, subsequent to the successful coup against Nizar by al-Afdal ibn Badr al Jamali 1094. This led to the establishment of a separate branch of Ismaili sect. Under the Persian Safavids one of the most influential Ismaili Imam was forced to leave Persia and take refuge in India in 1522A.D.. Ever since, the Ismailis of the Pamir region have kept a regular contact with India.⁹ Apart from the Ismaili Shi'ites of Gorno Badakshan, there are also small communities of Twelver Shiism in Bukhara, Samarkand and Tashkent all of whom believes in twelve Imams. Another sect of Shiism were the Assassin's of medieval Persia. The Assassins or the hashish eaters drugged their young followers and sent them on murderous and self sacrificing missions. But later on they were eradicated by the Moangols in the thirteenth Century.¹⁰

SUFISM IN CENTRAL ASIA

Sufi and Sufism is important in the social and religious life of Central Asia. It is an expression of mysticism and doctrinal development. The Sufi movements date back to the eleventh century AD and have vast literature associated with it. Some of the greatest Islamic poets and theologians are among the number of Sufist. Sufism was strongly rooted during its inception

⁹ ibid., pp.83-84.

¹⁰ Krader, n. 3. p.123.

among the artisans in the cities of the near east. Initially Sufism had no formal organisation or corporate body, but later on it became institutionalised into organised brotherhoods who were sending missionaries to convert non-Muslims to Islam. However Sufism has been a force in recent times among Sunni Muslims in Central Asia.¹¹

Amongst the many illustrious Sufis associated with the region were Yusuf Hamadani (1140 AD), Ahmad Yasavi (12th Century AD), Najivaddin Al Kubra (1145-1221 AD) and Baha-uddin Naqshbandi (1318-1389). Ahmad Yasavi was the first Turkic mystic and it was due to him and his disciples, that numerous *babas*, *atas*, *ishans* continued the practices of this Sufi order to the Central Asian Republics.¹² Sufi brotherhood (*tariqat-turuq*) have found Central Asia a fertile land for its growth. The best known Central Asian Brotherhoods are the YASAVIYYA and the NAQSHBANDIYYA.

The most popular Sufi sect, the Naqshbandiyya sect has a more orthodox orientation. This order was founded by Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Bahaudin Naqshbandi (1317-89) in Bukhara. It penetrated the Kyrgyz region through Kashgar in the 18th Century. The Turkmen tribes were exposed to this order in

¹¹ Thierry Zarcone, *Sufi Movements : Search for Identify and Islamic Resurgence*, K Warikoo. (ed.), *Emergency New Order in Central Asia*. (New Delhi), 1997, p. 63-75.

¹² Haghayeghi. n. 1 p.82.

the seventeenth and eighteenth century, leading to the gradual replacement of Yasawi order. Yasaviyya is generally permeable to pre-Islamic beliefs and has gained adherents among the people of the Steppes especially the Turkish speaking nomads. As the Naqshbandi were well known for its very orthodox interpretation of Sufi path and its members came from all classes of the society, lower and upper, therefore overwhelmed by the Naqshbandiyya sect, the Yasaviyya declined in Central Asia.¹³

Naqshbandi order penetrated Khorezm in the nineteenth Century, where it could succeed in assimilating a large number of the Kubrawi believers, thus assuming a dominant status in Central Asia until today. At present, it has its influence in the Ferghana valley, eastern and southern Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan.¹⁴

Alexander Bennigsen has emphatically outlined the reasons for the sweeping success of Naqshbandi order in Central Asia. Firstly, The Naqshbandiyya has a unique ability to adapt to changing social and political conditions.¹⁵

¹³ ibid., p.81.

¹⁴ ibid., pp. 82-3.

¹⁵ ibid., p. 83.

Secondly, it is linguistically accessible to everyone. In Central Asia it has a Persian and Turkic character, in the Caucasus it has an Arabic character.

Thirdly, it exudes doctrinal liberalism i.e. it excludes fanaticism and radicalism. It also has a highly decentralised structure, which has led to the development of multiple centres of independent religious authority which is held together by simplified and common Sufi rituals.

Finally the membership and leadership of the Sufi orders is exclusive rather than inclusive and is directly tied to the local clan structures. This has thus prevented the development of large scale Islamic coalitions capable of instigating radical political action. Sufi orders were politically active, leading to various movements against Buddhists, Kalmyks, Russians, etc. Recruitment of members in Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan is done from within the clan population. New members are selected carefully and observed well, before they are assimilated.¹⁶

As far as the leadership of the Sufi orders is concerned, the smaller centralized Sufi brotherhood such as the Qadiri have a well defined hierarchical structure, which have facilitated the preservation of leadership lineage within the

¹⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

family of the founder.¹⁷ Some Sufi sects have also exhibited religious unorthodox behaviour, with regard to the admission of women, not only as the members but also as leaders of the order, which is an indication of its anti-fundamentalist character. The most popular order Naqshbandiyya have been reluctant to allow women, but in contrast some branches of Yasavi, the so called Lachi and Hairy Ishans have allowed the establishment of women Sufi groups with their own leaders. According to Bennigsen admission of women into the Sufihood, has been in response to the fundamental role women played in the preservation of the national and cultural heritage of Central Asia.¹⁸

Apart from various Sufi orders, the influence of *dervishes* in Central Asia reached its peak during the reign of Timur in the 14th Century. Timur invited various leading Sufis to his court, and the best known of the order encouraged by him is the dervish order of Naqshbandiyya. *Dervishes* are among those who follow the Sufi system in their way of life. They have no parent institution as such and are organised into separate order, some of which being mystical and self abnegating, some politically active in the Persian and Turkic countries of Islam. Eastern dervishes were concerned with a state of holiness through good work and were known as *Fakirs*. The Islamic religious orders in general are of

¹⁷ Krader, n. 3 p.124.

¹⁸ Haghayeghi., n. 1. p.83.

two kinds-monastic and non-monastic. The dervish orders of the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries were close to the centre of power in Central Asia since one leader of the dervish order Kabul Shah-was named Khan in the Chagatay state in the fourteenth century.¹⁹ After the Naqshbandi in its importance and influence, were the dervish orders of the Hufiya, the Jahriya, the Khodriye or Kadiriyya, the Chistiya and the Alf Tsani. The Alf Tsani order was poor in number and of wealth. The Kadiriyya was wealthy and influential, whereas the Chistiya was powerful enough in Khodzhent and Kokand., Mosques and shrines of these orders and brotherhoods have been the centres of veneration and pilgrimage among the people.²⁰

The institution of *waqf* was also endowed for a religious purpose. A common form of *waqf* is the assignment of income from an estate for the support of a mosque or a school. In Bukhara the Caravansarais, were all founded by the *waqfs*, and the income from letting of sleeping quarters, stalls, stables storage places, belonged to the mosque and madrasshs of the city. The *waqf* endowment were free of all tax and tribute.²¹ In Central Asia both nomadic as well as sedentary people share some cult independently of the

¹⁹ Krader., n. 3. p.123.

²⁰ ibid, p.124.

²¹ ibid., p. 125.

degree of Islamic influences. The chief feature of this cult is the primary emphasis on holy places and pilgrimage to such places. The holy places usually comprised of **Mazars** (*mausoleums*) of saints (*Pir*). It was believed that a pilgrimage to these *mazars* may even substitute for a holy journey to Mecca. There are a vast number of these *Mazars* in Central Asia, and are not limited to any one sect. Samarkand and Bukhara have innumerable shrines.²²

In the history of Turkish Sufism, the nineteenth century was a very crucial period because at that time the Muslims discovered the western modernism, and thus a well known era of reform started. Sufi saints were open to the idea of modernization. The more radical amongst the Sufis, the Naqshbandis opposed the reform as the transformation was seen to be a threat for the preservation of muslim society. Jadidism had developed a more intellectual and philosophical Sufism as opposed to Ishanism (**Turuq**) and close on some aspects to socialism. Islamic opposition fought against the Russians and later against the new Soviet regime. It is obvious that the Sufi ideology was thus flexible. For instance, the situation of Naqshbandiyya in the Emirate of Bukhara was not similar to that of Tatarstan. In Bukhara, the Naqshbandiyya were conservaties

²² ibid., p. 126.

and supported the autocratic governments of Emirs, which was strongly opposed to the reforms undertaken by the Jadidist movement.²³

With the coming of power of the communist party Sufism and Sufi orders entered a period of severe persecution. The Marxists condemned the Sufi doctrine and also prohibited mystical brotherhoods. The Naqshbandis, therefore, assumed the role of protecting Islam. Sufi clergy gained new position and they first focussed on Mazars (mausoleums) of the major Sufi saints, which conserved cultural traditions in Central Asia despite the Soviet policies. The Soviet regime also forbade any kind of mystical practices i.e. pilgrimage to Mazars etc. Thus Sufism worked underground to preserve the Islamic and cultural traditions in Central Asia. These underground networks of Muslim brotherhoods, Sufis and clergy have been described by Bennigsen as 'Parallel Islam' as opposed to the 'Official Islam' of the Soviet regime.²⁴

ISLAMIC TRADITIONS AND PRACTICES:

A return to traditional Islamic rites and customs was a powerful movement with a strong nationalist flavour initiated by young intellectuals who believed that the survival of Central Asian nationalism or its assimilation by the

²³ Zarcone, n. 10 pp.65-67.

²⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 68-70.

Russians depended on the issue of the competition between the Islamic rituals and new ideology. An Uzbek Komsomol paper wrote " seventy years after the Great October Revolution, people still drift towards religion. What are they looking for? What attraction does religion exercise on youth?"²⁵

The public rite of the Muslims in Central Asia comprises of daily prayers and ablution. The institution of village priest or Mullah is also important. The annual rite of the Muslims reaches its peak with the celebration of *Ramadhan*, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar which marks the completion of the Holy Quran. All business activities are suspended during this holy month of Ramadan, and the days given over to fasting. It is a season of renewal of faith and social interaction because the people come together on this festival occasion Pilgrimage to Mecca, the birth place of Prophet Muhammad (PBH) was also an important tradition for the people who are able to do so.

Similarly Muharram is a public rite of a months duration. It is a rite of the first month of the year, which is closely related to the Shiite faith or belief. During this month the death of the sons of Hazarat Ali occurred at the battle of Kerbala and this death is reenacted in a passion play, bewailed, sermonized upon, and an occasion of great access of religious feeling.²⁶

²⁵ Bennigsen, n. 2 pp.93-94.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 126.

Private and family ritual (toi) are also celebrated in Central Asia especially on the occasion of the birth of a son, on religious marriages (*Nikah*) circumcision (*Sunnet*), religious burials (*Janaza*) and pre-Islamic customs of an Islamic nature, but sanctified by an age old tradition such as *Navruz*, *Pakhta Baveam*, the payment of *kalym* (bride price) during weddings. Each of these religious and family rites are briefly dealt below.

CIRCUMCISION [SUNNET] This is a religious ritual observed by all the male Muslims (practically 100% including the believers and non-believers). This is a very sacred ceremony celebrated by the members of the family and society showing their joy, showering gifts, money on the boy who has undergone circumcision. But this ritual came in for sharp criticism in Central Asia during the Soviet regimes. The Soviet described this practice as an unnecessary financial burden on families bringing psychological trauma to the child which weakened the children and rendered them unfit for military services. Notwithstanding the Soviet objections, case, this ceremony continued to be observed by all Muslims in Central Asia.²⁷

RELIGIOUS MARRIAGE : Soviet sources agree that the new Soviet practice of Komsomol wedding "no where succeeded in displacing the old religious one."

²⁷ Bennigsen, n. 2 p. 94.

Both rituals existed side by side. the Komsomol wedding was complete only after a *Shariah* wedding (NIKAH) was performed by a cleric (MULLAH). Another custom related to marriage which is considered a part of the national way of life is the “*Kalym* or the bride price. However, Tajikistan and Turkeministan, the practice of payment of *kalym* was not common. This practice of bride price was considered an offence in Central Asia during the Soviet period due to *Kaytarma* or the return of the bride to her parents home untill the full payment was made by the grooms family. In spite of numerous arrests and legal penalties against the culprits, it has not put an end to the payment of *kalym*. In the Andijhn region, the average price of *kalym* is 5000 rubles. In Khorezm it is 10,000 rubles. In Tajikistan and Turkeministan the average price of *Kalym* varies in between 30,000 to 40,000 rubles. The practice of *kalym* till today dominates the ceremonial marriages taking place in Central Asia, inspite of various criticism from the Soviet authorities.²⁸

RELIGIOUS-BURIAL : It is performed by a cleric either registered or more often unofficial cleric, who reads a *Janaza* prayer. This has always been observed by the majority of believers and unbelievers alike as a national custom in all Muslim republics.²⁹

²⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

²⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 95-96.

Apart from the above mentioned rituals, fasting, etc. are strictly observed in Central Asia. The revival of religious customs seems to be strongest in Tajikistan because of the influence of the Afghan Jihad, In Turkeministan due to the religious broadcast, from Iran and in Uzbekistan which retained the Muslim traditions despite the Soviet protest. In the North Caucasus, an old religious festival, the MAWLUD which commemorates the birth of Prophet Muhammad (PBH) (on the 12th day of the third month of the moon calender) has become a very popular ceremony in the recent years. Prayers are also read by the Mullah during the birth of a child, a funeral, a wedding, or even construction of house or the departure of a draftee for the army, and is attended by the entire population of the villages.³⁰

Ethnicity and ethnic culture function as autonomous forces moulding the supranational elements to local conditions. Some rituals like *Pakhta Baviam* (cotton Harvest festival) and *Navruz* (Spring festival) have entered the common official and national sphere in altered form. Family ritualism has a special importance in Central Asian societies. For all muslims and those raised according to Islamic cult or tradition, the family is a central social unit. No one can exist outside the family.

³⁰ ibid., pp. 96-97.

COSTUME IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN SOCIETY

In the matter of dress, the veiling of females has been a valid criterion of the degree of influence of Islamic Central Asia. The traditional position of women was behind the veil. The veil, *chachvan* covers the face. In addition to it, devout Muslim women wear the *parandzha*, a cloak like garment hiding the entire body from head to foot. In the medieval and modern times women were usually kept hidden from public gaze and hence out of public life. But women had their role in the family. A comparative analysis as far as veiling was concerned shows that the Kazakh women did not bind themselves to the yoke of laws of the *Shariah* to the same degree as the Uzbek women did. The Kazakh women participated in public religious festivals which was not so in the case of Uzbek women. As the women belonging to the Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Karakalpaks did not veil, this shows the relatively weak influence of Islam over these group of Central Asian Muslim population.³¹

During the nineteenth century a more fully developed interpretation of Uzbek costume was formed. Alexander Burnes (1813) during his visit to Uzbekistan writing about Uzbek men, states "The stranger beholds in the bazars a portly, fair and well dressed mass of people, the Mohammadans of

³¹ Krader, n. 3 p. 135.

Turkestan. A large white turban, and a chogha or pelisse of some dark colour over three or four others of the same description is the general costume".³²

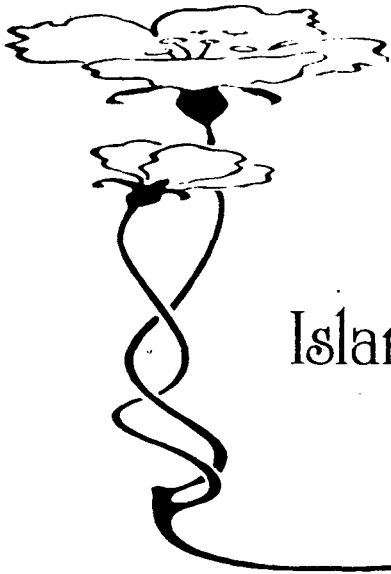
The costumes of women showed a more varied nature and reveals a mingling of tradition and change. Costumes basically varied according to the woman's age and professional status. Styles were more conservative in Samarkand and Bukhara than in Tashkent. Depending on the conservatism of their families girls, wear the dress with or without long full trousers - *ishton* - made of red flowered fabric. Hair was generally worn long - usually in a range of styles based on coiled plaits wound round the head and chignons. The costume of the peoples of Central Asia has, however, undergone varied changes from time to time. Existent Costumes and various traditions and practices reflect the rise of Islam and Sufi orders in Central Asia.³³

Islam is not only a religion but a part of the cultural identity for the Central Asian Muslims. It had and till today continued to play a very important role. Islamic influence is seen in the politics, cultural and social set up of the Central Asian society. The various Islamic traditions and practices, such as fasting during the holy month of Ramadhan, *Kalym* or bride price, though

³² Shirin Akiner., *Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia*, (London, 1989) p. 245.

³³ *ibid.*, pp. 245-246.

criticised by the Soviet authorities as unnecessary and illegal have continued to play an important role. People are drawn more closer to religion because of the manifested efforts of various Sufi saints and Sufi orders such as Naqshbandiyya and Yasaviyya in Central Asia. These Sufi orders were successful enough to preserve the Islamic undercurrents inspite of the anti Islamic stance of Tsarist Russians and Soviet authorities. Thus to say the various Sufi activities and Islamic beliefs and practices has infact gained strong foot holds in Central Asia owing to its heavy Muslim presence. Though there is a fundamental difference between the Shi'a's and the Sunni's but they unite together for a common cause i.e. the preservation of age old Islamic beliefs, rituals traditions and practises. It is the vissitudes of time which would prove their success.



Chapter 4.
Islam Under the Soviets

The October 1917 revolution resulted in the transformation of the Tsarist empire into a socialist state. Even though Islam survived the nineteenth century waves of the Tsarist Russian expansion in Central Asia, it came to be challenged by the Soviet authorities after the establishment of Soviet power in Central Asia. The Soviets adopted a number of anti-religious strategies and tactics to spread their culture of atheism among the Central Asian population. But Islam survived this phase of history as the Central Asian Muslims were able to adjust and adopt to the changing circumstances. Ultimately the Soviet efforts could only suppress the rituals and not the force of Islam. The Soviets believed that Islam will not wither away on its own, but had to be dealt with sternly if socialism was to be successful in Central Asia. Marxism and Leninism was, therefore, to provide a philosophical justification and the practical means in the Soviet fight against Islam.

Islam was so deep rooted in the rites, rituals and traditions of the Central Asian Muslim population that it could easily withstand the state efforts to dissuade it. The rise of various Sufi orders in Central Asia came handy to preserve the Islamic teachings and traditions. The underground Islamic activities which were undertaken by the Sufis were not recognized by Soviets and this

parallel Islam was seen to be opposed to the Islam recognized by the Soviet authorities (OFFICIAL ISLAM).

The changes that Islam underwent in Central Asia can be understood easily by discussing Islam as it prevailed during the time of Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev, with a brief introduction on the views of Marx and Engels on religion as a whole and Islam in particular.

MARX AND ENGELS ON RELIGION

The spiritual father of communism Karl Marx (1818-1883) has left behind a powerful anti-religious legacy. Both Marx and Engels argued that religion was a historical phenomenon, which is a characteristic of a particular phase of man's socio-economic development. Engels argued that " religion is nothing but the fantastic reflection in men's minds of those external forces which control their daily life, a reflection in which terrestrial forces assume the form of super natural forces". Marx believed that religion was a mystical expression of social frustration and of the dehumanizing conditions of society. Marx believed "religion to be the sign of the oppressed creature, the heart of the heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the masses".¹

¹ C.L. Wayper, *Political Thought*, (New Delhi, 1974), p.203.

Both Marx and Engels believed that religion was bound to wither away when the society from which it had emanated was completely transformed through class struggle, and by means of a great proletarian revolution. But soon after the October Revolution of 1917, Lenin questioned the validity of Marx's and Engels' assumption as he and others did not find the disappearance and withering away of Islam and Christianity, even though the social transformation as predicted by Marx and Engels came in 1917 (October Revolution). Lenin thus became the initiator of the debate about the origin, function and future role of religion in Russia, but got little or no support from the Russian revolutionaries.² A systematic and detailed description of Leninist era would focus clearly the stance of Lenin on religion especially Islam and his anti-Islamic strategies.

ISLAM UNDER LENIN

The foundation of Soviet anti-Islamic strategies were laid out considerably during the reign of Lenin. He pursued a two pronged religious policy or strategy which not only called for a comprehensive program of atheistic education but a systematic plan was evolved to attack religious establishments. The first phase of Lenin's fight against Islamic forces in Central

² Mehrdad Haghayeghi, *Islam and Politics in Central Asia*, (New York, 1996), p.15-16.

Asia was marked by the civil war which ended in 1920, and the second phase which lasted till 1927, when Lenin engaged Islam in a tug of war.³

FIRST PHASE : (1917-1920)

This phase was marked by the resurgence of Muslim religious nationalism in search of independence and also frequent raids by the local Bolsheviks on Muslim religious institutions and property. Lenin had very carefully studied the role of non-Russian nationalities in the struggle for power. He even recognised the right of nationalities to secede from Russia. To further strengthen his position in 1917, Lenin granted further concessions in the form of rights of equality and sovereignty of all, right of self determination etc. At the same time Lenin and Stalin also made a special appeal to the Muslims.

The appeal read as follows "Muslims of Russia, Tatars of the Volga and Crimea, Kyrgyz and Sarts of Siberia and Turkistan, Turks and Tatars of Trans caucasia, Chechens and Mountain people of the Caucasus, and all you, whose mosques and prayer houses have been destroyed, whose belief and customs have been trampled upon by the Tsars and oppressors of Russia; your beliefs and usages, your national and cultural institutions are forever free and inviolate. Know that your rights, like those of all peoples of Russia, are under

³ ibid, p. 16.

the mighty protection of the Revolution and its organs, the Soviet of workers, soldiers and peasants".⁴

As a gesture of goodwill the Quran of Usman which was confiscated at the time of the Tsarist conquest of Samarkand was restored to the Muslims of Central Asia. This was designed to garner support of the Muslims for the October revolution. But the Muslims now started demanding more autonomy. Stalin appealed to the entire Muslim population of Central Asia to support the Bolshevik movement. But the anti-Bolshevik Muslim forces. Such as the Turkestan Muslim organisation, the *Shora-i-Islamiya*, supported by the *Jadid* liberal reformist clergy, and the *Ulema Jama'ati*, dominated by the conservatives, united together to form *Ittifaqal Muslimun* (Union of Muslims) and declared autonomy in November 1917. Soon after the Russian educated Kazakhs declared their autonomy in mid-December.⁵

The October revolution garnered increasing support of the Russian settlers in Tashkent, and other industrial towns besides Muslims peasants and workers of Central Asia. By early 1918, the Bolsheviks were all set to dismantle the various Muslim separatist organisations in Central Asia and the Muslim resistance in Kokand was easily overcome. The year 1918 witnessed

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 16. quoted.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 17.

the beginning of a anti-Soviet civil war in Turkestan known as the Basmachi movement, which was aimed towards the establishment of begs, Khans, clericals, fuedals and nationalists in Turkestan. This movement had some local support within Central Asia, but it relied heavily on external support. The local support for the Basmachi Movement in Central Asia came mainly from the Aksakals (headmen) mirabs (writer administration) and volost administrators and from the Muslim clergy. Initially the peasants and articans also supported this movement. The Basmachis declared a holy war Jihad against the Soviet rule in the Ferghana valley.⁶ This revolt was mostly concentrated in four areas of Turkestan viz Ferghana valley, the Lokay region, Bukhara and Turkmen Steppes near Khiva.⁷

In order to overcome this revolt Lenin undertook various steps especially relying on force as well as diplomacy. He granted various concessions to the clerical leaders, who had suffered both political and economic blow due to operations of the Tashkent Soviets. But this revolt failed as it lacked a proper and unified leadership, and support of the masses who despised the tyrant Amirs, Begs and Feudal lords. More and more Central Asian Muslims began

⁶ Devendra Kaushik, *Central Asia in Modern Times*, (Moscow, 1966), pp. 166-7.

⁷ Haghayeghi, n. 2, p.18.

jointly the Red Army. By 1924, the Basmachi struggle was pushed into the remote mountains of the Ferghana valley posing no serious threat to the security of the Soviet Government.⁸

SECOND PHASE - (1921-1927)

Despite the heavy expenses of the civil war, Lenin adopted various legislative and institutional means to meet the Islamic challenge to the Soviet presence in Central Asia. The damage caused to the Tashkent Soviet, due to the Basmachi episode and on the recommendation of some prominent Muslim nationalists cum communists, it was decided to postpone anti-Islamic stance till 1923-1924. As a confidence building effort, the confiscated property, i.e. the Waqf property was returned, to the Muslims Islamic schools and mosques were reopened, and the practice of *Shariah* law was also allowed. Muslims were now admitted in the communist party. This assimilation policy was mainly started by Lenin to ensure some degree of Muslim support to the Soviet regime in Central Asia. As Marxism was less popular in Central Asia, the Soviets were less discriminatory in the selection of recruits for the communist party to harness greater local support.⁹

⁸ ibid, p. 18.

⁹ ibid, p. 18.

Once the assimilation policy met with success, Lenin now started applying his two point strategy. The first target being the legal Islamic institutions (Shariah laws, adat or customary laws .). A series of new decrees were issued delimiting the authority of the Islamic courts, whereby the Soviet courts took over the various cases relating especially to civil suits. The verdict rendered by the *Qazi* was also declared as illegal. Both criminal as well as the civil cases were now tried by the Soviet courts. In October 1924, the Soviet Criminal code was introduced which outlawed polygamy and bride price (*Kalym*). Subsequently, the registration of births, deaths and marriages was now undertaken by the Soviet civil authorities. The final blow to Islamic courts system came in 1927 when the Soviets issued a decree "On Shariah and Adat courts", invalidating the legal status of all such entities in Central Asia.¹⁰

With the eradication of the Islamic Courts, confiscation of Waqf properties, Lenin sought to dismantle the clerical power structure involving the Islamic education and training of the Central Asian population, which had been monopolised by the clergy for decades. Therefore in 1918, he laid the groundwork for the wholesale secularisation of education and thus separated the educational institutions from religious institutions. Muslim education

¹⁰ ibid, pp. 19-20.

traditionally was done at two levels *Maktahs* traditional schools and *Jadid* school. There were also primary institutions known as *Madrasahs*. But Lenin's law was modified in case of Central Asia as the Turkistan Communist Party proposed a three stage plan to gradually convert traditional Muslim education to secular education. A massive plan was carried out for atheistic education and propaganda. Various institutions were called upon to engage in scientific, educational and anti-religious propaganda, among which Communist Youth League (Komsomol) was prominent. The architect of Lenin's propaganda was Emilien Yaroslavski, who created a league of the militant godless in 1925. This league was incharge of all anti religious activities. Various publications were brought out in Moscow criticizing Islam, depicting Islam as anti- social, anti-feminist, intolerant and xenophobic religion with barbaric and unhealthy customs.¹¹

Despite the vigorous campaign against Islam in Central Asia, Lenin failed in his attempts to reduce the influence of Islam on the population at large. Lunacharski later acknowledged this failure in the following words, "*Religion is like a nail, the more you hit it, the deeper it goes in*". Thus Islam remained a

¹¹ ibid, pp. 20-22.

main aspect of the cultural and social life of the people of Central Asia. withstanding all pressures.

ISLAM UNDER STALIN

To a certain extent Lenin's policies were quite successful in weakening the clerical power structure and the eradication of public Islamic education and training. Now Stalin aimed at eliminating the outward attributes of Islam. Stalins religious policies can be categorized into two phases. The first phase was an effort by the Soviets to undermine all religions including Islam. The second phase witnessed the outbreak of second world war and the death of Stalin in 1953. The second world war was a blessing in disguise as somewhat permanent relaxation of religious policies was pursued, because the Muslims were required to render military services in the Soviet Army.

FIRST PHASE - (1928-1938)

Stalins anti-religious drive coincided with the first five year plan (1928-35), which was aimed at achieving socialism in all walks of life. The first step taken by Stalin was the large scale closure of mosques and prayer houses, whose members were drastically reduced from an estimated 26,279 in the pre-revolutionary period to 1,312 by 1942. In Central Asia alone some 14,000

mosques and religious schools were closed. The clergy, also became the target of persecution as their numbers were sharply reduced from 45,339 to a mere 8,872 for the entire Soviet Union. A system of heavy taxation was imposed by Stalin on the clergy to further reduce their financial autonomy.¹² Most important anti-religious crusade of Stalin was the amendment of the constitution, which resulted in the abolishment of the right to proselytize by any religious establishment. The freedom of religious and anti-religious propaganda under article four of the Soviet constitution was given to the people. This restricted religious practices and also threatened the survival of religion.¹³

In 1929, there was a "Law on Religious Associations", which established strict functional guidelines for organized religion and giving full right to the state to control and supervise religious activities. It also empowered the Soviet authorities to move against Islam. Apart from this a six dimensional law was supposed to operate to further strengthen the control of state over religion. According to law-

(a) religious institutions were required to obtain government approved registration in order to operate.

¹² ibid, p. 23.

¹³ ibid, pp. 22-23.

(b) the law prohibited charitable, economic and recreational activities by religious associations, and only allowed those functions relating to spiritual activities.

(c) this law set up a code of conduct regarding the functioning of religious associations, and stipulated the age for membership i.e. 18 years and above.

(d) Locations of religious associations were specified.

(e) It prohibited the collection of revenue by religious associations; and

(f) The Soviet government had the power to liquidate any religious association for the violation of its laws.¹⁴

Stalin's direct assault on Islam continued throughout the pre-world war II period. He also took certain measures to revitalise the Communist Party, from the so called vestiges of national deviationist. Many articles were published with an aim to discredit Islam and its rituals. Among the most important publications was "*The content of the Quran*", published in 1928, which heavily criticized the inferior motives behind the drafting of the Quran in the interest of wealthy people of Mecca. Lucian I Klimovich also went to the extent of denying the

¹⁴ ibid, p. 23.

existence of Prophet Muhammad (PBH).¹⁵ In spite of such anti-religious stance by Stalin, there was an underground mobilization drive in various parts of Central Asia to reopen the mosques. This was possible because the local Muslim leaders, under the guise of being Communists actually acted leniently towards Islamic culture and religion in Central Asia. The immediate step which Stalin took to meet this challenge was to recruit new cadres in place of old ones, who would be subservient to Soviet authorities. This was followed by the systematic arrest of various Muslim leaders, which began in Tatarstan in 1928. By 1937-38, all such Muslim leaders were arrested and later prominent leaders were brutally executed. The clergy was also not spared and was severely punished on charges of espionage etc.¹⁶

SECOND PHASE - (1939-1953)

The second phase was marked with the outbreak of the "Great Patriotic War", wherein Stalin was forced to reconsider his domestic political agenda. In so far as the Central Asian question was concerned, a qualitative shift in policy took place. This was done because of the requirement of military manpower. Stalin created an official Islamic power structure whose rank would be filled by those clergy willing to support the Soviet policies. Stalin was very well aware of

¹⁵ ibid, pp. 24-25.

¹⁶ ibid, p. 25.

the fact that attracting Muslims would be able to fulfill his plans. Therefore in 1941, the Soviet government established four Muslim Spiritual Directorates covering Central Asia and Kazakhstan, European Russia and Siberia, Northern Caucasus and Daghestan and Transcaucasia. But each Directorate and its membership was controlled by the Soviet authorities. In 1944, the Spiritual Directorate came into existence. In order to strengthen the position of Spiritual Directorate, Stalin issued a decree in January 1946, in which he reversed the law on Religious Associations. This helped in revitalizing religious activities which were earlier restrained during the first phase. Various Muslim clerics were engaged in calling upon the Muslims to support the Soviet war efforts. But this met with very little success as many Muslims reportedly defected to the Germans.¹⁷

The Soviets had to reconsider their domestic policies towards Islam and the Muslims, because of the victory of the allied forces (Germany). A positive attitude towards Islam was shown by Stalin, when he started having connections with the Middle East and other nations of Africa and Asia. He sent official clergy on propaganda tours to various countries and also received religious

¹⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

dignitaries from Muslim nations. Stalin's tolerant attitude towards formal Islamic training and education, was a new policy shift.¹⁸

After the World War II period, a restricted resumption of public theological training started in Central Asia. The Mir Arab Madrassah founded in 1535 in Bukhara, was reopened in 1952. Apart from acquiring Islamic education, the students were required to learn the Soviet Constitution for a period of two hours per week. According to Bennigsen, "the Madrassah neither could extend adequate training at the level necessary to graduate Muslim jurists, or Ulema, nor could it replenish the shrinking pool of the clergy". Islamic literature was also permitted to be published on a small scale, the restriction being on the Quran. Apart from this a number of previously banned Islamic rituals were allowed to be practised. For example, the pilgrimage to Mecca (Haj) was resumed in 1944. Other Islamic rituals such as Islamic income tax (Zakat), fasting during the month of Ramadan, public prayer (salat) etc were to some extent allowed to be observed in the post war period.¹⁹ The number of legally sanctioned mosques increased. Friday prayer was also performed in the main Tashkent Mosque in 1954.

¹⁸ ibid, p. 27.

¹⁹ ibid, pp. 27-28.

As part of the Soviet moves of softening policy towards Islam, the government sponsored anti-religious activities were abandoned by dissolving the league of Militant Godless and by suspending the publication of various anti-religious articles. Stalin saw no point in pursuing the anti-religious policies on one hand and also allowing a limited government sponsored Islamic revival on the other hand. By undertaking such measures, Stalin tried to demonstrate to the Muslim world the freedom enjoyed by Soviet Central Asian Muslims. After two and a half decades of brutal purges, innovative organizational schemes and massive propaganda campaign, Stalin took to his grave, the harsh reality of his unsuccessful war on religion in 1953.²⁰

ISLAM UNDER KHRUSHCHEV

Like Stalin, Khrushchev also pursued an anti-religious policy, but his anti-religious drive had lost some of its steam, but later on it was reinvigorated in the after-math of Iran's Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the threat it posed to the Soviet Muslim republics. Khrushchev being fully aware of the persistence of religion in the Soviet Union, felt obliged to intensify, the anti-religious policy. He brought about economic rationalization to further legitimize his anti-religious position arguing that certain rituals of Islam such as pilgrimage to holy places

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 28.

during the summer harvest as well as fasting had an adverse effect on agriculture production.²¹ From 1960-64 attack on religion were made directly or indirectly. He could not carry out formal attack on religion because of sharp division within the top ranks of the Communist Party. Another cause of delay in the intensification of anti-religious drive was related to the Soviet foreign policy concerns. Khrushchev was faced with the same problem, which had forced Stalin to reverse his anti-religious policies with respect to Islam. Thirdly he was more deeply involved in modifying domestic policy matters such as bureaucratic reorganization etc. Finally, the tenacity of religion forced Khrushchev to call for a comprehensive re-assessment of the theoretical and practical dimensions of the Soviet anti-religious policy, before any action was taken.²²

Therefore between 1954 and 1959 the Soviet government continued its effort studying the problems facing the anti-religious campaign. Various atheistic conferences were held throughout Soviet Union. The year 1960 marked the official beginning of Khrushchev's new offensive on religion. No new legislation or constitutional reforms were introduced by Khrushchev to reorient the anti-religious drive. Instead he focussed on the law enforcement aspects of the Soviet anti-religious campaign for which the Soviet Council of Ministers

²¹ ibid, p. 29.

²² ibid, p. 30.

issued a decree entitled "*On the strict observance of the laws on Religions cults*", in March 1961. The overall strategy being three fold - (a) a direct attack be launched against the clergy as well as external attributes of religion, (b) laws to be thoroughly implemented, (c) severe penalties for religious offense.²³

By 1963, Khrushchev's anti-religious policies had reached new heights. Mosques were closed down, number of registered clergy was reduced, internal pilgrimages by Muslims to holy sites was prohibited to further restrict Islamic rituals. The clergy were also arrested in many places. Despite all these efforts Khrushchev's hardline approach of 1960-64 period did very little to change the overall picture of religious life in the Soviet Union.²⁴

ISLAM UNDER BREZHNEV

Brezhnev like khrushchev focussed on the law enforcement aspect of the anti religious drive and at the same time, he called for a comprehensive study of Islam the believers. The policies which Brezhnev adopted were more positive and result oriented ones. The only change under Brezhnev involved the re-ordering of priorities in the fight against religion. It was decided to focus heavily on socialist and atheistic education rather than attacking religion

²³ ibid, p. 32.

²⁴ ibid, p.33.

directly. At a more specific level it was argued that "the basic efforts should be concentrated on the steady reduction of the reproduction of religiousness among the new generation of the Soviet society. Therefore it was felt necessary to improve in every way the atheist i.e. education in family and in school, showing special attention to children from religious families and seek the most lively, emotion packed and aesthetical forms of anti-religious propaganda among children, teenagers and young people". Brezhnev continued his efforts to strengthen the legal and constitutional aspects of Church - state relations. The basic philosophy behind this was to deal swiftly with the violators of the existing religious laws.²⁵

As far as Islam was concerned, the Soviet government went even one step further by moderating its traditional position, which depicted it as a reactionary instrument used for the spiritual oppression of the East. Islam under Brezhnev was assigned a progressive character and was praised as an anti-colonial religion. It was further admitted that some social principles of Islam were compatible with Marxism, therefore the government encouraged a limited and tightly controlled interaction between its official clergy and the Muslim world.²⁶ The outbreak of Iran's Islamic Revolution in 1978-79 put an end to a

²⁵ ibid, p. 34.

²⁶ ibid, p. 35.

decade of relatively unstable relations between the Soviet authorities and Islam. Islamic revolutionary success in Iran helped in triggering a series of anti-Soviet demonstrations and riots in Dushanbe, Alma-Ata and other cities of Central Asia. The Soviet response to the events in Iran and Central Asia followed three distinct and contradictory patterns. The first pattern was to implicitly welcome the revolutionary change in Iran with a view to glorify Islam. Several Muslim conferences were held in 1979-80. These conferences called for the establishment of a permanent exposition on the subject of Islam in the Soviet Union. The second pattern corresponded to the strengthening of security and law enforcement aspects in the Muslim Republics. Finally, the Soviet government intensified its propaganda activities across the board in Central Asia. Various articles appeared in daily newspapers attacking Islam and its reactionary orientation, a far cry from the earlier Soviet foreign policy position on Islam.²⁷

Though various steps were undertaken against Islam, the Soviet efforts failed to either substantially reduce the influence of Islam on believers or to convince the outside world of its good intentions. The Soviet campaign against Islam proved to be an utter failure, due to the lack of ideological commitment to

²⁷ ibid, pp. 35-36.

socialism among the Muslims of Central Asia. To destroy Islam, therefore, meant to destroy the centuries old identity of the Central Asian believers. Socialism as a relatively young and a foreign ideology proved no match for a culturally well embedded religion like Islam.

ISLAM UNDER MIKHAIL GORBACHEV

On March 10, 1985 Mikhail Gorbachev succeeded Konstantin Chernenko as the first Soviet leader from the post-Brezhnev era. Right from the beginning till the August coup and until his resignation in 1991, Mikhail Gorbachev followed well advertised policies of *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness), which was intended to remedy an entirely different set of socio-economic and political ills in the Soviet society. But in contrast it became an official machinery for the expression of ethnic, linguistic, cultural, environmental and religious grievances that had not been addressed openly in the recent decades. This resulted in the gradual revival of religion, including Islam in Central Asia.²⁸ During the first three years of his tenure Gorbachev followed his predecessors as far as his treatment of religion including Islam was concerned. But later on Gorbachev realised that, for his economic reforms to be successful, the views of government on religion also had to be restructured.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 41.

During the Brezhnev era, there occurred economic stagnation, to which the provincial Governors and Brezhnev had turned a blind eye. Even though the standard of living had risen and the real income of the people doubled, the macro-economic indices showed a very grim picture. Lack of discipline in work places, excessive alcohol consumption and corruption at all places became widespread. After the death of Brezhnev, things remained the same under Konstantin Chernenko.²⁹ It was now left to Gorbachev to revive the entire economic structure of Soviet Union by following certain liberal policies. Although Gorbachev was fully aware of the magnitude of the socio-economic and political problems facing the Soviet Union, he did not push for a radical reformist agenda, but built a team and evolved a consensus.³⁰ His policy of *perestroika* and *glasnost* which made subsequent impact on Central Asia in general and Islam in particular, can be discussed into two phases. The first phase 1985-88, was marked by a massive anti-corruption campaign, to reestablish tighter control over Central Asia. The new Soviet policy towards Islam was different from the earlier rulers. In fact, Gorbachev blamed Islamic culture for the widespread corruption in Central Asia. The second phase 1988-91, during which *glasnost* was permitted to be practised freely, reflected the ethnic,

²⁹ ibid, p. 42-43.

³⁰ ibid, pp. 46-47

linguistic, cultural and environmental sentiments of the people of Central Asia. This period ended with the August coup and the declaration of independence by the Central Asian republics.

FIRST PHASE - (1985-1988)

The Soviet authorities took various anti-corruption campaigns in Central Asia and many prominent leaders were either removed or arrested, and some opted for voluntary retirement before the actual expiry of their term. New appointments were made in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and, Kyrgyzstan. Riots and disturbances broke out in various places including Dushanbe. In December 1986 riots occurred in Alema-Ata after the native Kazakh leader Din Muhammad Kunayev was replaced by a Russian, Kolbin. Corruption in Central Asia came in heavy criticism by Gorbachev. Cotton scandal of Central Asia was the main feature of such corrupt practices.³¹

Gorbachev was the only Soviet leader in recent times who did not have a well publicized anti-religious agenda. Economy was the main pre-occupation of Gorbachev, but then he did not abandon his anti-religious policies all together. His first direct reference to religion came after the 27th party Congress held in late February 1986, where he emphasized indirect scientific propaganda

³¹ ibid, p. 50.

methods rather than direct attack on religion. For Gorbachev the battle against Islam, was more against a reactionary religion.³² As Olcott has rightly pointed out "*The prevalence of Islam is viewed by Gorbachev as troublesome in so far as it undermines the regime's reform program*". Islam was later declared to be incompatible with socialism. Apart from the anti-corruption campaign going on in Central Asia, numerous articles were published in native language newspapers, criticizing and condemning Islam and Islamic practices. By 1986, local party plenums had become primary platforms to launch direct attack on Islam. It was also believed that the stronghold of Islam on Central Asian society was due to the absence and lack of proper anti-religious campaign. The plenum held in Uzbekistan in October 1986 launched a massive attack on the celebration of various Islamic festivals. Schools were provided with proper anti-religious guidelines, which was to be followed strictly.³³

Hundreds of full time ideological cadres were dispatched to the rural areas of Central Asia, with a view to conduct anti-religious campaign. Moscow also sponsored an '*Atheism month*' to demonstrate its resolve to combat Islam. Various attempts were undertaken to show Islam as a reactionary ideology. Many unofficial clergy were arrested and sentenced to jail.³⁴ Despite the government's

³² ibid, pp. 54-55.

³³ ibid, p. 55.

³⁴ ibid, p. 56.

iron fist policy, religious activities among the different age groups in Central Asia demonstrated an upward trend, which the officials could no longer deny. But the Soviet policies towards Islam and other religions began to show signs of some positive changes in 1988. Gorbachev now became very cautious in his policy of *glasnost* especially towards Central Asia. His policy of *glasnost* found its confidence among the Central Asian people, as after many years of oppressive intolerance, the government / would now welcome criticism of its conduct and also listen to the grievances of the ordinary people. In Central Asia *glasnost* brought about the formation of informal groups and associations with location specific agendas and some of these organisations later involved into various political parties and movements. Thus to say even though Gorbachev followed an anti-religious policy in the initial years of his reign, later on because of his policy of *glasnost* some significant changes were noticed in his attitude towards religion.³⁵

SECOND PHASE - (1988-90)

Change in Gorbachev's policy towards religion was brought out mainly by a combination of three factors viz. (a)decisive defeat of the conservative faction of the politburo, led by Gorbachev's arch enemy Ligachev in 1988. (b)it

³⁵ ibid, p. 57.

was realised by Gorbachev and his confidants that reform in the economic structure would only be possible and successful if there is a reform in the ideological structure and (c) there was an increasing pressure exerted from below by the believers, the clerical leadership and some segments of the intelligentsia who wanted to see the implementation of *perestroika* and *glasnost* extended to the spiritual realm of Soviet life. The discourse of religion and morality began with the publication of articles and literary pieces in 1986.³⁶

The clergy and seminary teachers debated on the status of religion in the Soviet Union. In spite of undertaking various debates and discussions on religion, the government policy remained unchanged. But Gorbachev became increasingly concerned about the issue. He resolved his policy of contradiction by granting religious concessions, which opened a new chapter as far as relationship of Church and state was concerned. Initially these concessions were granted to Christian and Jewish believers in 1988, only a year later some concessions were also given to the Muslims. Prior to the concession to Muslims, religious protests in Central Asia occurred in December 1988.³⁷

Thus to say that for the communists, it took seven long decades to reckon with Islam. For Muslims who felt humiliated at the hands of the communists, the

³⁶ ibid, p. 58.

³⁷ ibid, p. 62.

long awaited victory was celebrated by collective participation in Friday prayers, religious festivals and pilgrimage to holy places in Central Asia.³⁸ The tenacity of Islam was thus paid off. All these things were made possible by the efforts undertaken by various political organizations, which culminated with the independence of Central Asian Republics in 1991.

OFFICIAL ISLAM AND PARALLEL OR NON-OFFICIAL ISLAM UNDER COMMUNISM

In Central Asia, Islam is divided vertically and horizontally. The horizontal division breaks Islam into Sunnism and Shi'ism, with further sub divisions into orders and sects. During the Soviet period Islam was vertically divided into 'official' and 'non-official' Islam.³⁹

The 'official' Islam is a Soviet instituted system that includes Islam in the structure of society. 'Official' Ulema, Mullahs as a rule received education in *madrassahs* (traditional Islamic college), they maintained more or less close relations with the state religious boards and were also registered in the Council of Religious Affairs, the official part of the state government and administration. They functioned openly organizing Friday prayers in mosques, weddings and

³⁸ ibid, p. 68.

³⁹ Hafeez Malik, *Central Asia, Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects*, (London, 1994), p. 106.

funerals. The community elders acted as contacts between mosques and members of the community.⁴⁰

Contrary to the 'official' clergy, the activities of "non-official" clergy was not controlled by the state authorities. These 'non official' Mullahs received their education in illegal *maktabs*. These Mullahs apart from conducting religious activities, functioned in the state or cooperative sectors. These non official Mullahs were not always thoroughly educated, but they exercised great influence in the every day life of the community. They contributed to the politicization of the community in opposition to the state authorities.⁴¹

Relations between the 'official' and 'non official' clergy was complicated and hostile. Prior to the disintegration of Soviet Union, official and unofficial clergy struggled for influence in Muslim society. Official clergy, who were connected with the state authorities used their position to compromise non official clergy, labelling them as extremists who did not understand Islam and erroneously explained the Quran. In spite of this visible conflict, many official Mullahs had maintained clandestine contacts with the 'non-official' ones. The 'non-official' Mullahs blamed the official Mullahs for deviating from Islam and selling themselves to the Soviet authorities, thereby making Islam serve the

⁴⁰ ibid. p. 107.

⁴¹ ibid. p. 107.

regime. But later on this 'non-official' Islam became the foundation for the birth of various Islamic parties (fundamentalist in character) in Central Asian Republics, who are now engaged in the power struggle.⁴²

The leaders of the official Islamic establishments (Muftis, clerics etc.) showed unconditional loyalty towards the Soviet regime, when the leaders especially Mufti of Tashkent, Mufti of Ufa etc. were asked to comment on the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, the Mufti of Ufa Talgat Tajeddin commented that *"real religious freedom exists in the U.S.S.R., because religion is not used for political ends. The believers go to the Mosque, but nobody would oblige an unbeliever to do so"*. The Mufti of Tashkent, Shamsuddin Babakhanov commented that *"believers in the U.S.S.R. enjoy absolute freedom in praising the Almighty Allah without any hindrance from the government. They have at their disposal a great number of mosques. The government is providing the necessary aid for the building or the restoration of mosques."* The Mufti added.... *"I wish that all our co-religionists in the world may attain the same level of progress, which is enjoyed by the Muslims of U.S.S.R. to be free and as happy as we are"*.⁴³

⁴² ibid, pp. 107-108.

⁴³ Alexander Bennigsen, "Islam in Retrospect", *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 8, n. 1, (1989), pp. 97-98.

The above comments of various Muftis denote their open submission to the Soviet regime. This group of clerics recognised by the Soviet government enjoyed full freedom but with certain amount of restraint by the Soviet authorities. They were the registered clerics and Muftis. The Muslim Religious Boards of Central Asia and Kazakhstan defined the nature and scope of religious activities for the believers, instituting this concept of 'official Islam'. This recognised Islam continued to play a significant role in shaping the ongoing Islamic revival by keeping a close watch on the activities of those Muslims who have chosen to return to the traditional way of life after nearly 80 years of involuntary interruption. Some segments of the general public were also critical of the official Muslim clergy who have been accused of compromising the interest of Islam by collaborating with the old communist regime.⁴⁴

Anti-Islamic campaign was mainly directed against the 'parallel Islam or non-official Islam', whose representatives were either adepts of a Sufi brotherhood or simply dedicated (fanatics) believers, and were very active in Central Asia especially in 1987. This 'parallel Islam' developed with such great intensity that it attracted a number of students. Secret houses of prayers were replacing the existing few official mosques. The number of clandestine mosques was put at *1800* by Balaiev as compared to 365 official working mosques in

⁴⁴ Haghayeghi, n. 1 p. 157.

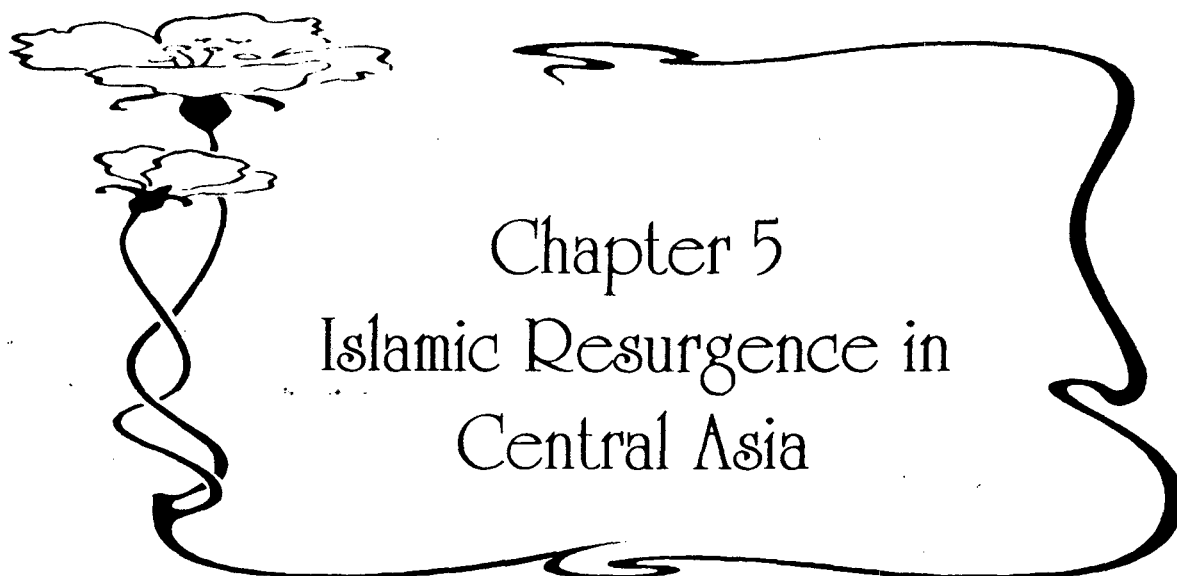
1987.⁴⁵ A significant development was in rural areas in 1987 where one could hardly find an 'official Mosque'. The tea houses were used as prayer houses.⁴⁶ Sufi brotherhoods, especially in the northern Caucasus, and also in Central Asia withstood all possible onslaught of the Soviet regime on Islam. They thus managed to maintain a structure of 'parallel Islam' which kept Islam alive in Central Asia without direct confrontation with the regime. The official Islam was also only recognized by the four Muslim Spiritual Directorates in Central Asia.⁴⁷

Thus religious activities which were carried out by the 'unofficial' Islam had far more reaching consequences than of the 'official Islam'. The clerics and Mufti's of the unofficial Islam used to work underground and thus were in direct contact with the people, whereas the official Islam toed the Soviet official line. Due to various activities undertaken by the various Sufi brotherhoods and clerics etc., Islam remained a vital force in Central Asia and could thus withstand the various criticisms and anti-religious activities of various Soviet regimes.

⁴⁵ Bennigsen, n. 52 p. 101.

⁴⁶ Eden Naby, "The Emerging Central Asia Ethic and Religious Factions", *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, (Tehran).

⁴⁷ Michael Rywkin, "Islam and New Soviet Man", *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 6, n. 4, (1987), p. 31.



Chapter 5
Islamic Resurgence in
Central Asia

The political confusion stemming from the break up of the Soviet Union and a related political instability in the newly independent Central Asian Republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, caused considerable consternation all over the world. The Islamic revival in Central Asia in the post-Soviet era only signifies the failure of Soviet efforts of secularisation. Nowhere in the world has religious feeling been suppressed for so long and yet been revived with such great enthusiasm.¹ The process of Islamic revivalism was inadvertently set in motion by Mikhail Gorbachev's, policy of *glasnost*, and *perestroika*, which provided the Central Asian Republics with an officially sanctioned vehicle for expression of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic, environmental and religious grievances, that remained curbed for over seven decades.²

Loosening of the communist control helped the people of Central Asia to raise their voice against the communist bureaucratic structure of 'official Islam' i.e. the Islam sponsored by the state. People now learnt to bypass 'Official Islam', as they set up their own mosques and other structures. The arrival of millions of copies of Quran, funds, literature and *mullahs* from Saudi Arabia,

¹ Ahmed Rashid, *The resurgence of Central Asia - "Islam or Nationalism"*, (Karachi, 1994), p. 244.

² *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 42, no.2 (Spring 1989) p. 399.

Iran and Pakistan in the Central Asian Republics came handy to spread their version of Islam.³

The immediate reaction of *glasnost* varied from Republic to Republic, the overall pattern reflected more on the ethnic and nationalistic sentiments than religious aspirations⁴. However, later on, the religious concerns over the lack of public prayer accommodation and Islamic education began to be heard frequently in all Republics. Such demands were considered legitimate, because of the coercive treatment of Islam and Muslims by the Soviet government in the past.⁵ There were many incidents that took place prior to the disintegration of Soviet Union. In 1989, a major development in Uzbekistan took place, when the Muslims of Uzbekistan launched a campaign to depose Shamsudin Babakhanov ibn Zeyadin, the Head Mufti of the Muslim Religious Board of Central Asia, which was established in 1941, to oversee the religious affairs of Muslims in the Soviet Union. The campaign was masterminded by an organisation named '*Islam and Democracy*' whose declared objective was to '*cleanse Islam in the Soviet Union*'. Accused of violating Islamic codes of behaviour and conduct, Babakhanov was forced to resign. Events of such nature

³ Rashid, n. 1, pp. 244-245

⁴ Mehrdad Haghayeghi., "Islamic Revivalism in Central Asia" *Central Asian Survey* vol. 13 no.2 (1994) pp. 249-250

⁵ *ibid.* p. 250.

strengthened the resolve of the Muslims to revive Islam in Central Asia, especially after the break up of the Soviet Union. Apart from Uzbekistan, there was Islamic revivalism going on in the other Republics as well. Mehrdad has identified four factors determining the essential dynamics of Islamic revivalism in Central Asia. “*Firstly*, the Islamic tradition of the Central Asia is not of firebrand variety, like that of Shiism in the Muslim world. Furthermore, the general proclivity towards Islam varies from Republic to Republic with Uzbekistan as the most religiously fervent followed by Tajikistan. *Secondly*, a qualitative distinction should be drawn between the government’s preferred role for Islam and that of the mass religious preference. *Thirdly*, the ideological predilection of the newly established political parties as well as their organizational and mobilization capabilities influenced the pattern of Islamization. *Fourthly*, the strength or weakness of the democratic drive can significantly alter the balance of forces within each Republic.”⁶

With an estimated population of more than 60 million people, the inhabitants of Central Asia are predominantly Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi School. Islam has been an integral part of the cultural identity of the people of Central Asia right from its inception in the eighth century A.D. Although Islam

⁶ Mehrdad Haghayeghi., *Islam and politics in Central Asia..* (NewYork, 1996) pp. 73-74.

found its way into the region by way of sword, it perpetuated its identity through the help of Muslim merchants trading in the region. Thus Islam made a lasting imprint not as a creed with organized political objectives, but simply as a way of life. The observance of Islamic rituals has been more lax in Central Asia, as compared to the Middle East, which is a clear manifestation of mild Islamic tendencies in the region.⁷ To what extent the observance of Islamic ritual may be used as a litmus test for measuring the vigour of Islamic revival is a matter of great controversy, more so when such a criterion is used to assess the growth of radical Islam, which incorporates elements of fundamentalism. However, every indication seems to point to the emergence of a moderate Islamic trend.⁸ Apart from the influence from various Middle East and West Asian countries, the role played by some political parties or groups in Central Asia have also fuelled the process of Islamic revivalism in the Central Asian Republics.

The political parties in Central Asia are organized on ethnic and inter-Republican lines incorporating the idea of Pan-Turkism, such as the Turkistan Party Erk, Birlık. Other political parties in different Republics were founded on a single issue such as *Ashar* of Kyrgyzstan, which has been advocating large

⁷ *Middle East Journal* vol. 43, no.4, (1989) pp. 509-613.

⁸ Haghayeghi, n. 4, pp. 251-252.

scale land distribution. The Islamic and the democratic parties belong to this category, which are more capable of influencing future course of events in these Republics.⁹ Two types of political parties were active in late eighties.. The first were the republican parties which vary in their ideological orientation, command a small following and are less organized. For example, the Kyrgyz Democratic Wing is supporting the ongoing Islamic revivalism in Kyrgyzstan. This party has been pressing for the renovation and construction of mosques, *madrassahs* etc. Uzbekistan's Islamic Democratic Party which was founded in 1988 is a fundamentalist party. It seeks the creation of an Islamic state in Uzbekistan.

The second type of parties are the inter-republican parties which has a large mass following, for example the Islamic Revival or Rebirth Party (IRP) which has branches in all the Central Asian Republics except in Kyrgyzstan. The main objective of the IRP has been to revive the basic ideals of Islam.¹⁰ The party has been successful enough to enforce the observance of Quran and Hadith by the people, to educate people about the basic principles of Islam, fight against corruption, crime, alcoholism and to ensure that the rights of all Muslims are exercised according to the Quran. The overriding objective of creating an Islamic state has put the party (IRP) into lockhorns with the governments of the

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 253.

¹⁰ *Soviet Muslims Brief* - vol.60. no. 3. (1990) pp. 4-5.

Central Asian Republics.¹¹ Apart from these prominent political parties, there are various other small political parties operating in Central Asia with a militant objective. The supporters of these parties are the young educated urban youth, who have been brought up on the new teachings of Islam. However, these groups have not been able to garner enough support to influence the ongoing process of Islamic revivalism in Central Asia.¹²

Since the break up of the Soviet Union the idea of establishing an Islamic state in Tajikistan, have been primarily supported by the Tajik fundamentalists, which is attributed to a large extent, to the traditional striving of the Farsi speaking Tajiks to use Islam as a means to consolidate their position dominated by the Turkic - speaking peoples of Central Asia. But the ex-communist leadership and cadres in Tajikistan are against the Islamization of politics. They regard these Muslim fundamentalists as the most dangerous adversaries. The presence of large scale Russian population in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan makes any attempt to establish an Islamic state even more difficult.¹³ A union or confederation of all Central Asian countries into a single Islamic block is, therefore, an utopian concept. Of the five Republics, only Tajikistan is capable

¹¹ S.W.B. (22nd May 1992).

¹² S.W.B. (26 Oct.'91)

¹³ *Middle East Journal* - vol. 60, no.2., (Spring 1996) p.218.

of staking its claim for an Islamic state, because of the strong presence of religious fundamentalists there.

The process of religious revivalism remains strong in the countryside of Uzbekistan, which is a serious worry for the government in Tashkent and also for the secular sections of Uzbek population. Uzbek women feel very uneasy about the various changes wherein greater emphasis is placed on traditional values and subordinate status of women in Islamic society. The Imams who teach the people how to pray, the basics of Islamic rites, also lecture them about the creation of an Islamic republic and the overthrow of the secular government.¹⁴ In order to prevent Islamic extremism from gaining ground, political parties based on religion are banned in Uzbekistan's constitution.

QUANTITATIVE DIMENSIONS OF ISLAMIC RESURGENCE IN CENTRAL ASIA

Though the political manifestation of Islam has remained relatively limited in scope, its unhindered religious presence have been making a noticeable impact on the cultural landscape of Central Asia. Islam no doubt was present in Central Asia right from the eighth century AD, but the communists

¹⁴ Dr. Gareth M. Winrow., "A Region at crossroads : Security issues in Post Soviet Asia", *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* vol.18. no.3. (1994) pp. 7-8.

used it according to their own convenience. The various Muslim Religious Boards were instituted to keep a check on the religious activities. The clerics were registered and were allowed to conduct prayers and various Islamic rites and rituals with the connivance of the Soviet authorities. Thus emerged the concept of 'official Islam'. Apart from the 'official Islam' which was recognised by the Soviet authorities, there were some clandestine activities undertaken by the Sufis and non registered *mullahs* and clerics to keep alive various Islamic rituals under the name of 'non-official' or 'parallel Islam'. The mosques, *madrassahs* and *maktabs* were constructed with the agreement of Soviet authorities. But things took a drastic turn during the reign of Mikhail Gorbachev, whose policies of '*glasnost* and *perestroika*' came in handy to the people of Central Asia to give vent to their long suppressed religious aspirations.

Today things have changed and the Central Asian believers are now busy restoring their traditional socio cultural and religious practices, which were hindered by the imposition of communist rule soon after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The Islamic revivalism in Central Asia follows closely the general pattern of Islamic proclivity that existed prior to the communist takeover, with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan leading the process.

After the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991, certain significant changes have taken place in Central Asia as far as religion is concerned. The various Religious Associations and Religious Boards were banned and people got a free hand as far as religion especially Islam was concerned. Various steps were undertaken towards the construction of mosques, *madrassahs*, *maktabs* etc. In 1994, an estimated 7,800 mosques and prayer houses were opened in Central Asia, out of which nearly half of the mosques are located in Uzbekistan, in the Ferghana valley and Karakalpak region.¹⁵ Between 1989 and 1991 the Uzbek government returned a number of religious sites to the people, including the Kalon mosque, the Ata Walikhai mausoleum etc.¹⁶ In Tajikistan too a number of mosques and prayer houses were established in the period 1991-92. According to the Qazi of Kyrgyzstan, Kimsanbay Ben Abdurahman, more than one thousand mosques have been operating in the Republic, out of which 60 percent of these mosques are situated in the Osh and Jalabad oblast.¹⁷ In Kazakhstan also there are more than 300 Mosques and around 200 mosques were constructed in 1993. Majority of these mosques are situated in Chimkent, and Jambul Oblasts.¹⁸ The most elaborate mosques under construction in

¹⁵ Haghayeghi, n. 6. p. 96.

¹⁶ *ibid.* p. 96.

¹⁷ *ibid.* pp. 96-97.

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 96.

Central Asia have been externally financed and funded by Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, Turkey and other Gulf states as well as donations received from the government and people.

Apart from the construction of different mosques, Islamic education is also gaining momentum especially among young Muslims, who wish to make Islam into a career. By being *mullahs* and clericals . The number of students enrolled in various *madrassahs* including the Barak Khan and Mir Arab (two major *madrassahs*) has gone up alarmingly. Many religious schools were also opened in 1991.¹⁹ Scholars from Central Asia are also being sent to various Middle East countries for higher education and religious training. Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt have been receiving many such scholars from Central Asia. School curricula in the Central Asian Republics include courses in Arabic, Shariah laws, Islamic history and civilization and Islamic culture. Despite the availability of these institutions, the educational process has been severely hampered due to the lack of adequate Islamic literature. In 1990, Saudi Arabia donated few million copies copies of Quran to the Religious Board in Uzbekistan. Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt and Kuwait have also donated such

¹⁹ ibid. p. 97.

literature. Islamic literature is imported into Central Asia which is also due to the higher cost incurred in printing such literature locally.²⁰

The disintegration of Soviet Union has also encouraged the people to observe various Islamic rituals, especially circumcision, religious marriages and religious burials. The *Kalym* (bride price) has added on the post-independence economic decline of Central Asia. Most urban bride families now give the *Kalym* in the form of kind. Attendance at Muslim burial sites has shown significant rise in recent years. Participation in Friday prayers, has been high in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. But in the remaining three Republics of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the attendance in mosques has not increased as compared to the rise in the construction of mosques.²¹

Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan has also made a very significant arrival especially in Uzbekistan. The president of Uzbekistan even issued a decree in 1991, whereby the working Muslims were permitted to miss work on the first day of fasting.²² Elaborate ceremonies marking the beginning of Ramadan are held in various mosques annually. Number of Muslims making pilgrimage to Mecca has increased steadily since 1990. In fact the Central

²⁰ ibid. p. 97.

²¹ ibid. p. 98.

²² ibid. p. 99.

Asian, governments have been encouraging their people to undertake pilgrimage to Mecca which is also made possible by generous Saudi funding. Yet desirous Muslims of Central Asia are unable to perform Haj due to the heavy financial cost involved. As to the observance of Islamic dress code, no significant change has taken place since 1990. Many people in cities dress in western outfits, the women do not cover their head according to Islamic tradition. But in some areas in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Osh region of Kyrgyzstan women wear the traditional dress covering their head. There has also been rise in the number of men wearing a white Islamic hat while participating in the public prayer sessions.²³ Communism proved no match for such a culturally well embedded religion like Islam. It took Soviet Union seven long decades to reckon with the powerful reality of Islamic presence in Central Asia. For those muslims who endured the suffering and humiliation, the fulfilment of their desires was celebrated by collective participation in friday prayers, religious festivals and pilgrimage to holy place in Central Asia. The tenacity of Islam had indeed paid off.

Thus from the above studies we can say that the process of Islamic revival is quite strong in Central with more stress on Islamic education, Islamic rituals and rites. Now the people of Central Asia are free to exercise their

²³ ibid. p. 99.

religious rights in open without any fear. But in the process of Islamic resurgence in Central Asia, the role played by external factors especially Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Egypt, Kuwait cannot be under-estimated. These countries having their own interests in Central Asia have made their presence felt quite significantly.

Turkey has been actively involved in the religious and cultural rejuvenation in the Central Asian republics. From the ideological point of view two forces are at work. *Firstly*, is the force of radical Islam, which has an element of fundamentalism and anti-western imperialism in its approach to polity and society. *Second*, is the conservative Islam with no anti-Western tenets, which is represented by Saudi Arabian style of fundamentalism on one hand, and the Turkish secular version on the other hand.²⁴

Besides, this the *Wahhabi* movement has been slowly and steadily gaining influence among the Uzbeks in the Ferghana valley in Uzbekistan, Osh and Jalalabad oblasts in Kyrgyzstan. The *Wahhabis* known as the puritans of the Islamic faith, believe in the establishment of a Muslim community similar to that which existed during the time of prophet Muhammad. (PBH). The *Wahhabi* movement was introduced to Central Asia from India in the early 19th

²⁴ Haghayeghi, n. 4. p. 257.

century. But the origin of this movement is traced back to Muhammad ibn-abu-al-Wahhab who was born in 1691 in Najd. He was a strict follower of Hanabali teachings, the strictest of the four great schools of Islamic jurisprudence. He was greatly disturbed by the various laxities and superstitions attached to Islam. To him, the sacred shrines, richly ornamented tombs, the use of intoxicating drugs etc. were the blatant departures from the first principle of Islam. He wanted the Muslims to follow the principle of simple life as mentioned in the Quran.²⁵ Later on Wahabbi faith, became politicised. A well known Wahabbi leader Rahamatollah, whose puritan Islamic views gathered a considerable following in Marghillan.

The Wahabbi movement has been receiving sizeable financial support from the Saudi Arabian movement, *Ahl-e-Sunnah*, for the construction of mosques and *madrasahs* etc.. The Wahabbis also condemn Sufism, which enjoy a sizeable following in Central Asia, second only to Hanafi Islam. The Puritan views of the *Wahabis* are not shared by the Muslims of Central Asia who adhere to the Hanafi School of Islam, noted for its general liberal orientation and its emphasis on private opinion (*rai*) and public consensus (*jima*), in administration and interpretation of Islamic principles.²⁶

²⁵ Haghayeghi n.6 pp. 92-93.

²⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 94-95

After the disintegration of Soviet union, the Muslims of Central Asia became more free regarding their spiritual and cultural goals. The Sufi personalities like, Ali Shir Navoyi, Ahmad Yasavi, Bahauddin Naqshbandi etc. are now depicted as prominent figures of national literature. The rehabilitation of major mystical writers has drawn interest in Sufi brotherhood. Such rehabilitation and restructuring of the Sufi order in Central Asia is only expediting the process of Islamization. In various republics Sufism and Jadidism have been rehabilitated. In Ferghana valley and Caucasia, Sufi tariqat remains very powerful. Sufi mausoleums in Samarkand, Tashkent, and Bukhara which were earlier the targets of Marxists criticism are now open to Muslims and are also being restored. Number of books on Sufism are being published all over Central Asia especially in Uzbekistan.²⁷

Islamic radical groups i.e. the Wahabbis are against the teachings of Sufism in religious schools (*madrassahs*). Yusuf Sadiq, a former Mufti of Uzbekistan criticised the inclination of Sufis for seclusion and withdrawal from worldly affairs. However Sufism is an instrument of Islamisation besides being a significant component in the quest of identity in which new Muslim Republics of Central Asia are engaged.

²⁷ Thierry Zarcone., "Sufi movements: Search for identity and Islamic Resurgence in Central Asia" K. Warikoo., *Central Asia Emerging New Orders*, (New Delhi 1995) pp. 70-75.

Thus to sum up the Islamic resurgence and Sufi revivalism in Central Asia was made possible only after the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union. The traditions and certain orthodox views are now gradually becoming transparent keeping in view the changes in the mental attitudes of the people. The Sufi orders have again been successful in reviving the faith of the people in the teachings of Islam.

ROLE OF TURKEY FOR THE REVIVAL OF ISLAM IN CENTRAL ASIA

Upon achieving full independence in 1991, the Central Asian states turned towards Turkey as a model of a modern state. The most appealing factor in the Turkish secular model founded by Kemal Ataturk was its fundamental principles of nationalism which was lacking in Marxism and Leninism. The Kemalist model from the political point of view had affinity for the Central Asian leaders, as it fitted well both with the traditional Central Asian society and deep rooted norms of the old Soviet system. Another important factor for the Central Asian Republics was the Turkey's religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic closeness.²⁸ Thus Central Asia opted for the Turkish model of development secular government, moderate Islam and fast growth.²⁹

²⁸ Igor P. Lipovsky., "Central Asia in search of a New Political Identity" *Middle East Journal* - vol. 50., no.2 (Spring, 1996) p.212.

²⁹ P. Stobdan., "Islamic Reawakening in Central Asia: Towards Stability of Conflict" *Strategic Analysis* (September 1992). p. 507.

Turkey became the first country to recognize the independence of Central Asian Republics and established diplomatic ties with them. By 1991 a flurry of diplomatic visits took place accompanied by the signing of economic, commercial and cultural agreements between Turkey and the five Republics of Central Asia. Much of Turkey's cultural and religious effort has been concentrated in Kazakhstan and Turkeminstan.³⁰ Turkey's initial euphoria towards Central Asia was buttressed by common language and culture. The languages of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan are Turkic dialects, and their people come from Turkic stock. So their leaders looked first towards Turkey for political inspiration and economic aid. The apparent ethnic symbiosis between Central Asia and Turkey overwhelmed the Turkish leadership and they began to perceive their country's role in Central Asia. President Turgut Ozal declared that "the coming century will be a Turkic age."³¹

The people of Central Asia, except Tajikistan, are ethnically, linguistically and religiously related to Turkey. Both the countries profess the Sunni variant of Islam and belong to the Hanafi school. Turkey's use of Islam in its foreign policy towards Central Asia seems to have been prompted by two

³⁰ Haghayeghi, n.4. p. 531.

³¹ *Middle East Report Washington D.C.* (April-June 1996). vol. 26, no.2, p.3.

events in its back drop - (a) the Armenia Azerbaijan conflict and (b) the ethnic cleansing of Muslims in Bosnia Herzegovina.³² Turkey's religious assistance to Central Asia was channelled through a state organ, representing an 'official Islam', the Directorate of Religious Affairs (D.R.A.). It is the largest and best financed government departments of Turkey which controls mosques, religious educations, foundations and charities. It provided voluntary aid to Central Asia. Turkey has resorted to shipments of the Quran and other religious books, despatch of Ulema and scholarships to Central Asian students intending to pursue the study of Islam in Turkey.³³ Turkey was one of the first countries to send *Ulema* to Central Asia, starting with the despatch of 357 Turkish *Ulema* to these states during the holy month of Ramadan in 1991.³⁴ In March 1992 the DRA despatched 76 Ulema to Central Asia to lead prayers in mosques and give sermons, which was followed by an appeal to the Muslims in Turkey for funds to build mosques in Central Asia.³⁵ Central Asia's Nakshbandi order has a history of long standing ties with its Turkish counterpart. In its efforts to revive Islam in Central Asia, Turkey undertook various steps in Kazakhstan and

³² Graham E. Fuller, *The Geopolitical Order*, in Ali Banu Azizi and Myron Winer (eds.), "The New Geopolitics of Central Asia and its Borderlands". (London 1994). p.35.

³³ Dilip Hiro, *Between Marx and Mohammad : The Changing face of Central Asia* (London. 1994). p. 68.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 68.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 71.

Turkmenistan. Though the process of Islamic revivalism has been less vigorous in Kazakhstan. President Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan sought assistance from Turkey to start a plausible religious and cultural course in the Republic. He visited Turkey in 1991 and various treaties were conducted including a television link up.³⁶ This was to wage an aggressive cultural campaign by Turkey to help convert the written language of the Turkic speaking republics into Latin alphabet.³⁷ Turkey also agreed to provide educational assistance to Kazakhstan and fund religious education in Kazakhstan. A Turkish group led by a well known Islamic jurist Halif Altav toured various cities and towns in Kazakhstan. On its part, the Kazakh government undertook the renovation of old mosques and construction of new ones in the Republic, to accommodate the religious sentiments of the people.³⁸

Turkmenistan, too signed an agreement with Turkey which provided assistance of two million dollars for the purchase of printing and laboratory equipments. 140 students were sent to Turkey to receive Islamic training for becoming Muslim clergy.³⁹ Apart from providing assistance to the Republics of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Turkish training centres were established in

³⁶ Haghayeghi, n.4. p. 261.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 261.

³⁸ SWB (11th April 1992).

³⁹ SWB (7th February 1992) (March 1992)

Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan's cultural and educational needs were also fulfilled by Turkey. Turkey's involvement in Tajikistan has been limited as both the countries do not share a common language and culture. Nevertheless, Tajikistan expressed interest in cooperation with Turkey in education, science and culture.⁴⁰

Turkey's involvement in the religious revivalism in Central Asia was made possible because of its close cultural and religious proximity. It provided Central Asian Republics with literature and copies of Quran and also funded the construction of mosques and training to Muslims students. The Central Asian Republics have been receptive to Turkey's initiative in all fields of activities. Turkey has provided Central Asia with a secular model of Islam.

ROLE OF IRAN IN THE ISLAMIC REVIVALISM IN CENTRAL ASIA

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian Republics started looking towards the Middle East for economic assistance and for international recognition. Iran and Turkey were the two countries which wanted to exercise complete control over these independent Republics. The Islam on which Turkey was established was a secular model with no anti west tenets, but the Islam practised by Iran was radical Islam having a combination of

⁴⁰ SWB (6th March 1992).

fundamentalism and anti-western imperialism in its approach.⁴¹ Thus the secular version of Islam was more appealing to the Central Asian Republics. But Iran's role in the revival of Islam in Central Asia cannot be overlooked. Iran played a significant role in Central Asia especially in Tajikistan. As the population of Central Asia are Sunni Muslims belonging to the Hanafi school, the Shiite variant of Islam which is dominant in Iran did not appeal the Central Asian Sunni Muslims. Yet the Iranian Shiites made inroads in Tajikistan.⁴²

Due to its close religious, cultural and geographical ties to the Central Asian Republics, Iran was bound to play a prominent regional role in Central Asia particularly in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.⁴³

Tajikistan's quest for cultural and religious revival began in 1986-87 period. By 1989, Persian language had been declared the national language of the Republic. Arabic, which was the language of the scriptures was to be taught in schools, but this was not implemented. Therefore in January 1992, an agreement was reached with the Islamic Republic of Iran which agreed to assist the Tajik government in its endeavours to replace Cyrillic alphabet with Persian. Iran also agreed to publish more than two hundred thousand books for use in

⁴¹ Haghayeghi n.4, p. 257.

⁴² Malik, n. 26 pp. 237-238.

⁴³ Haghayeghi n.4 p. 258.

secondary schools.⁴⁴ Iranian teachers were sent to Tajikistan to facilitate this process. Tajik students were also permitted to receive University education in Iran. Both the countries agreed to cooperate in television and radio broadcasts in Persian and Arabic, which were to be transmitted directly into the Republics.⁴⁵

Iran has been instrumental in making available contemporary Islamic literature to Tajikistan. It is also involved in the training of the Tajik clergy. Numerous mosques and prayer houses have been established.⁴⁶ Iran is instrumental in the Islamic revival process in Tajikistan, which is the most fertile ground for Iranian influence. Teheran has expediated its involvement in reshaping Tajikistan towards an Islamic perspective.⁴⁷

Iran also expanded ties with Turkmenistan, the only Central Asian Republic bordering Iran. Persian and Arabic are taught in schools and exchange of scholars and teachers has taken place between the two countries. Kazakhstan has been very cautiously courting Iran since November 1991. It was reported that the Kazakh television aired a programme entitled, "The face of Iran" celebrating the establishment of the Islamic Republic. It also took steps to

⁴⁴ SWB (14 January 1992).

⁴⁵ *Foreign Affairs* vol. 71, no.3. (Summer 1992), p. 121.

⁴⁶ Haghayeghi n.4, p. 259.

⁴⁷ Stobdan, n. 28, p. 508.

prevent religious extremism in the Republic. A separate Islamic Jurisdiction, under the supervision of Muslim religious Board of Central Asia was established in Kazakhstan. Though Iran did try to spread its policy of radical Islam which is fundamentalist in character, but the independent Central Asian Republics are not receptive to this concept.⁴⁸ By adopting the secular version of Islam, Iran and Turkey are locked in a rivalry over exercising of influence in the Republics, in which Turkey has an upper edge.

ROLE OF SAUDI ARABIA IN THE REVIVAL OF ISLAM IN CENTRAL ASIA

The course of Islamic revival in Central Asian Republics is also influenced by the forces of conservative Islam exerted through Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia alongwith Turkey have been actively involved in presenting alternative Islamic paradigms so as to destabilize the affect of Iran in these Republics.⁴⁹ In their jockeying for influence in the Central Asian states, Saudi Arabia is playing the Riyadh card i.e. the hard currency, as the newly independent Republics require dollars to rejuvenate their economy. Saudi Arabia possesses the necessary financial means as well as the western support like Turkey, to produce the desired cultural and religious results.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ SWB (23 April 1992).

⁴⁹ Haghayeghi n.4 p. 262.

⁵⁰ Stobdan, n. 28. p.512.

Saudi Arabia has been active in the Central Asian Republics since February 1992, when Prince Saud al-Faisal visited Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in order to make a preliminary assessment of the religious, political and economic situation in these Republics.⁵¹ The Saudi Prince said during his visit in Ashkabad, that Saudi Arabia "has focussed its attention on cooperation with brothers in the Islamic world ... We express our desire and hope to cooperate with them, and to establish ties of amity in order for the future of this region to be as prosperous, as its past was"⁵² King Fahad received the Presidents of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan during their separate visits in April 1992. Saudi Arabia's active role is extremely important because, it is aimed at providing religious orientation to Central Asian Muslims, especially after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Saudi Arabia's religious services so far has been limited to the promotion of the Arabic language, pilgrimage to Mecca and renovation of historic mosques in the region. Saudi teachers were also despatched as a part of an effort to enhance the understanding of the tenets of Islam and Quran. A million copies of the Quran were sent by the Saudi King to these regions as a gesture of goodwill.⁵³ It also sent a 60 million dollar package earmarked for Central Asia, for investing in the reconstruction of Islamic

⁵¹ Haghayeghi n.4 p. 262.

⁵² Malik, n.26, p. 317.

⁵³ Haghayeghi n.4 p. 26.

institutions, destroyed during the communist rule.⁵⁴ Saudi Arabia also provided facilities to Muslims in Central Asia for their Haj pilgrimage. The Saudi government extended a two year invitation to those Uzbek people who wish to participate in the Haj ceremony, to be paid for by the Saudi Ministry of *'Awqaf and Haj'*. It also raised the Central Asian Republics quota of pilgrims to more than fifteen thousand in 1993. Saudi government is also funding Central Asia for religious education in the form of establishing various *madrassahs*, and *maktabs*.⁵⁵

The Middle East countries especially Saudi Arabia have intensified their efforts in the process of Islamic revival in the Central Asian Republics. The economic assistance which is provided to these Republics is not only to meet their financial needs, but also to undertake the construction of various mosques and religious, educational institutions. As the birth place of Islam, Saudi Arabia holds a special place for the Muslims of Central Asia. And since the majority of the population of Central Asia is of Sunni faith, Saudi Arabia has a tremendous advantage in providing Islamic education to them.⁵⁶ Here the position of Iran gets undermined as it is of Shiite faith.

⁵⁴ Stobdan n. 28 p. 512.

⁵⁵ Haghayeghi n.4 p. 262.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 530.

ROLE OF PAKISTAN IN THE REVIVAL OF ISLAM IN CENTRAL ASIA

Pakistan's interest in Central Asia cannot be overlooked or underestimated. Pakistan has its own designs in Central Asia. The idea is to set up an "Islamic crescent" in the north stretching from the Caspian Sea to the Arabian Sea. Pakistan has a greater stake in getting Central Asian states into the Islamic fold, because such a thing will rationalise its own existence as a nation state.⁵⁷ Pakistan's intention was also to carry out a holy war against the communists beyond Afghanistan into Central Asia. With the first available opportunity, Pakistan sent its high level delegation to Central Asia in November 1991., mainly to explore the possibilities of trade links with Central Asia. Two separate land routes to Central Asia for access to the sea, *one* through Afghanistan and *other* from Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan through Xinjiang were opened with northern Pakistan.⁵⁸ Pakistani families seek to link their ancestral past with Central Asia, forgetting that Central Asians have much greater cultural and traditional nostalgia with India and not Pakistan. Pakistan also showed its interest in Tajikistan because of developments in Afghanistan.

Apart from Pakistan, the developments in Afghanistan have also led to the rise of fundamentalist Islam in Tajikistan. Militant Islam has become a real

⁵⁷ Stobdan, n. 28 p. 512.

⁵⁸ *ibid.* p. 513.

threat to Central Asia. Contacts between the two regions have been continuous through history.⁵⁹

Islamic parties and groups in India too have been able to extend their clandestine religious activities in Central Asia, by providing Muslim clerics from India to Central Asia for training people in the tenets of Islamic traditions. However, the role played by Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran carries greater significance due to its close proximity to the region. Regarding the geopolitical variables, the pendulum of advantage is likely to swing between Iran and Turkey, with Saudi Arabia playing an important role in heightening the Islamic consciousness of Muslim Central Asia. However, the growing of this Islamic consciousness into politicised and militant Islam will be determined by the capabilities of the Central Asian countries to develop and prosper economically.⁶⁰

The process of Islamic resurgence is not smooth sailing for the Central Asian Republics. The majority of the population are Sunni Muslims belonging to the Hanafi traditions, implantation of rigid Wahabi and sectarian beliefs, on Central Asian society is not so easy. Besides, ethnic minorities too are bound to resent any such hegemonic tendencies. It would be difficult for the Islamic

⁵⁹ Malik, n. 26 p. 238.

⁶⁰ Haghayeghi n.4 p. 538.

parties to build a political movement that cuts across ethnic lines. The ethnic divisions, rivalry, open market economy and the developments in Tajikistan and Afghanistan are dissuading people from joining such movements. Another major obstacle to fundamentalism is the rise of Sufism. Along with the Islamic revival, there has been a tremendous revival in Sufism, the mystical trend of Islam. The Sufis are tolerant towards Buddhist, Shamanist and even Christian beliefs. Everywhere in Central Asia, thousands of people are once again visiting various shrines of old Sufi saints. Collective farms are rebuilding these shrines at their own expense.⁶¹

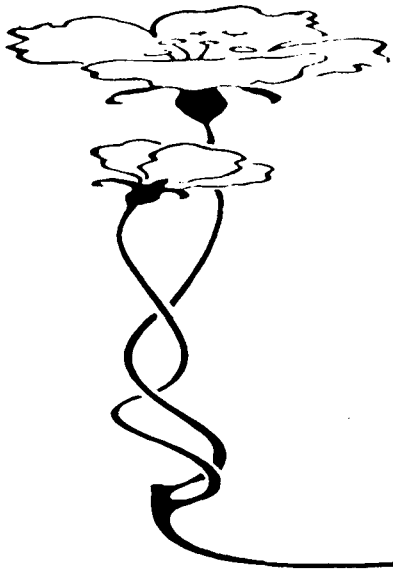
The private world inhabited by Sufis kept Islam alive in Central Asia during the worst communist repression, as it was a deeply silent personal expression of faith which does not need mosques or prayer house. Sufism with its belief in the power of saints has once again grappled people's imagination at a time of enormous political and economic turmoil. The fundamentalist leaders attack Sufis of being tolerant towards un-Islamic beliefs and influences, and have also criticized them for being divergent from the actual teachings of the Quran. But these Sufis have no organised response to the threat of the Islamic fundamentalists, as the Sufis don't believe in political parties. The Sufis are now reviving the old skills of martial arts, meditation and yoga and publication of

⁶¹ Rashid, n. 1 p. 246.

ancient poetry and literature. In contrast, the fundamentalists have little to offer in this regard. People were initially lured by the fundamentalists, but have now understood the real beauty of Islam in Central Asia which is actually deep rooted in culture and philosophy, besides religious tolerance.⁶²

To conclude, rejuvenation of Islam in Central Asia is a reality now. However, the politicisation of Islam and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia, is dependent upon the continuation of the present Central Asian leadership or regimes in various Republics. Decline in the economy, rising unemployment, curtailment of social services in health, education, transport sectors etc. can lead to increasing disenchantment of the people of Central Asian Republics, with the present leadership, at the same time swinging their attention to pan-Islamist political ideology and parties. Thus Islamic revivalism as a spiritual force in Central Asia is tolerated by the present leadership. But the rise of political Islam is seen as a direct threat to the political stability and peace in Central Asian Republics.

⁶² *ibid.* p. 247.



Conclusion

Prior to the introduction of Islam in Central Asia by the Arabs in the eighth century AD, there existed many religious faiths and beliefs, such as Buddhism, Manichaeism and Christianity. The spread of Islam in Central Asia was carried out in various phases by the Arab invaders, missionaries and merchants. Islam was forced on the people of Central Asia, who in order to escape from the payment of *Jaziya*, accepted this faith. *Jaziya* became a heavy financial burden for the non Muslims in Central Asia, who thus adopted Islam as a religion of convenience. In order to spread this faith in the various regions of Central Asia, the Arabs established various Islamic *madrassahs* and *maktahs* to provide Islamic education to the population.

Construction of mosques was also undertaken in Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva. The judicial structure of the Muslims was based on the Muslim customary law (*adat*) and the canon law (*shariah*) Islam also brought an art of writing and education based on Arabic script and Persian literature. The role played by the three Khanates of Kokand, Khiva and Bukhara for the spread of this new faith was significant. In the Turkestan area, presently corresponding to the Republics of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan there is a strong Islamic presence. Islamic religion and culture has had a profound impact on the local Muslims population, as Islam first entered these areas in the late seventh and early eighth century. However in the Steppe region of

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan Islam entered only after the fourteenth century, which has resulted in the retaining of pre-Islamic belief and practices.

Islam had to face various challenges, not only from the Tsarist Russians, but also from the Soviets during the communist regime. The Russian advance in Central Asia which began in the nineteenth century did not encounter any united resistance from the local Muslim population, who were wary of the tyrannical rule of the Khans and Amirs. The main aim of Russian annexation in Central Asia was to secure military and strategic gains to counter the British imperialism in the East. However, the Russian conquest of Central Asia was viewed with suspicion and aversion by the Central Asian Muslim population. The Russian policy towards the Muslims of Central Asia was a policy of *Laissez Faire*, which meant a policy of non-interference or let alone. The *Mullahs* were allowed to teach and preach Quran, but the *dervishes* were restrained because of their fanatical attitudes.

TH-7290

Things started changing with the rise of *Jadidists*, in the nineteenth century who stressed on modern education. *Jadidists* movement laid the foundation for acceptance of modern means of education among the Muslim population of Central Asia. However, the *Qadimists* (traditionalist) were vehemently opposed to the *Jadidists*, being against any change in the theory and practice of Islam, and traditional forms of Islamic education. The *Jadidist* infused a consciousness of national self-determination amongst the

Central Asian population. They wanted the people to adapt to changing circumstances, which could be made possible through western education.

The Tsarist Russian regime supported the *Qadimists*, as they perceived the *Jadidist* to be a direct threat to their political supremacy in Central Asia. The Tsarist colonial rulers treated the Central Asian Muslims discriminatorily and the new Russians settlers were given privileges as compared to the local Muslim population. The Tsarist regime viewed Islam to be an impediment in progress of the people of Central Asia. This perception was based on the Muslim practices of veiling of women, pilgrimage to holy places, and practice of circumcision which interrupted work and rendered people unfit for military services. But the rise of *Jadidists* movement led to a socio-political reawakening among the Muslim of Central Asia.

The rise of Sufism in Central Asia during the eleventh century A.D. was also a manifested effort to preserve the traditions and practices of Islam, thus retaining the real essence of Islam. The activities of various Sufi networks in the form of 'parallel Islam', preserved Islamic traditions and practices in Central Asia.

The Soviet adopted an anti religious policy towards Islam in Central Asia. The Soviets followed the dictum of Karl Marx describing religion as

'*an opium of the masses*'. Lenin, even though was anti religious in his approach gave the rights of succession to Muslim of Central Asia and at the same time he banned various religious establishment and institutions. The religious policies of successive rulers after Lenin however remained unchanged, except during the time of Khrushchev, who laid stress on the economic rationalization yet continuing with an indirect assault on Islam.

Gorbachev, who became the leader of the Communist Party in 1985 was anti-religious in his approach initially, but later on changed his position because of his policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. This policy came in handy for the people of Central Asia to give vent to their long suppressed ethnic and religious aspirations. The 'official Islam', which had *mullahs* and clerics registered with the Soviet authorities became less influential as it was overtaken by the 'parallel Islam' in Central Asia. Due to the efforts and underground activities of 'parallel Islam', religious revivalism was successful in Central Asia

Journals and newspapers are also being published with a view to educate and raise consciousness of the people. As religion was one of the main concern for the *Jadidists*, therefore a clear link between *Jadidism* and Islamic revivalism can be drawn as both are two sides of the same coin, because both stress on adherence to modern education, religious and cultural freedom political and social re-awakening in Central Asia. The *Jadidist*

movement could expose the extremists in Central Asia. The *Jadidist* movement though not fully, but was partially successful in Central Asia. Thus to say the *Jadidist* movement which was aimed at modernization of Central Asian society by providing western education to the people along with Islamic education still has an everlasting impact on the Central Asian society even after its independence.

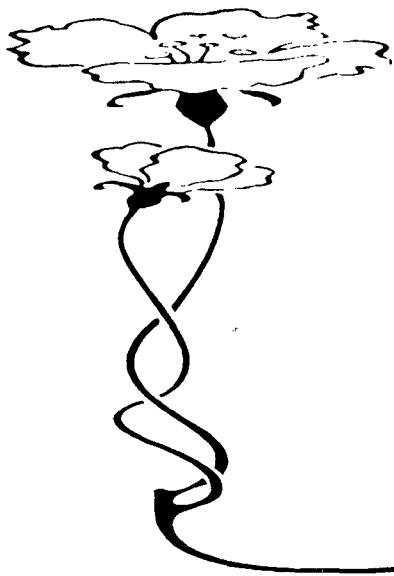
Restoration of old mosques, and construction of new *madrassahs* and *maktabs* throughout Central Asia is symbiotic of Islamic revivalism process. Performance of various religious rituals such as, religious marriages, circumcision, religious burials have gained intensity and deep roots in Central Asia. Even though the Tsarist and the successive Soviet regimes were against the Sufi brotherhoods in Central Asia, they latter succeeded in preserving the Islamic undercurrents. Notwithstanding the fundamental difference between the Shias and the Sunnis, they have united together for a common cause in the preservation of Islamic rites, rituals and traditions in Central Asia..

In the process of Islamic revivalism in Central Asia, the influence of external factors especially the West Asian countries have been very significant. After the disintegration of Soviet Union and the independence of the Central Asian Republics in 1991, Islamic revivalism has gained momentum because countries like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan

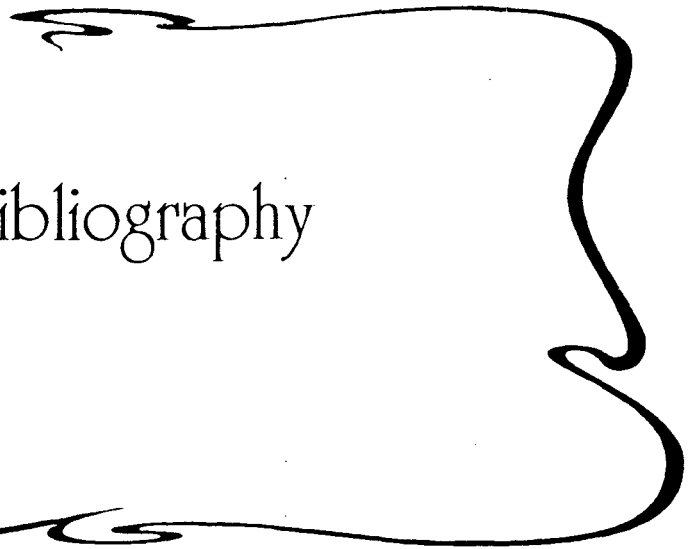
are engaged in a tug of war for extending their influence in these Republics. Islam in four of five Central Asian Republics is based on Turkish secular model. Turkey sent vast literature and even *Mullahs* to Central Asia to educate the people about various Islamic principles. Saudi Arabia has been pumping in lot of money for the construction of various mosques and religious institutions in Central Asia. Million copies of Quran have also been sent to Central Asia. Iran has been active in Tajikistan. Pakistan's interest in Central Asia is due to economic and political reasons, but as far as religious revivalism is concerned, Pakistan's Islamic fundamentalist parties have been quite active in Central Asia. The number of existing mosques, *madrassahs* and *maktabs* has witnessed significant rise especially after the disintegration of Soviet Union. The people are now free to assert their religious freedom with the construction of various mosques and *madrassahs*.

The Tajik Afgan Crisis has added another dimension to the politics of Central Asia especially the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Now the greatest challenge before Central Asia is the development in Afghanistan, the current political turmoil and the rise of Taliban, which has posed a serious threat to the Central Asian Republics especially, for its secular model of government. As these Republics are still in a nascent stage and their economy is weak, they are forced to depend on the help of West Asian countries. The

deteriorating economic condition and its dependence on other Islamic countries, means the expedition in the process of religious revivalism. As the ~~governments~~ Central Asian Republics have direct contact with Iran, Turkey, Pakistan Saudi Arabia etc., their political policies would be influenced by them. thus resulting in the direct impact on the religious policies. It is the vicissitudes of time which would prove the independent role of these Republics in the international political scenario. Thus to conclude Islam is not only a religion but a part of the culture and identity of the Central Asiaⁿ Muslims.



Bibliography



BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS:

- Akiner, Shirin (ed.), Cultural Change and Continuity in Central Asia, (London, Kegan Paul, 1989).
- _____, Islamic Peoples of Soviet Union, (London, Kegan Paul, 1986).
- Allworth E. (ed.), Central Asia - A Century of Russian Rule, (London, Oxford Press, 1967).
- _____, The Nationality Question in Soviet Central Asia, (New York, prager Publishers, 1976).
- Baily, F.M., Mission to Tashkent, (London, Oxford Press, 1947).
- Barfield, Thomas. J., The Central Asian Arabs of Afghanistan, (Austin, University of Texas, Press, 1981).
- Barthold, V.V., Four Studies on the History of Central Asia, (Netherlands, 1962).
- Bennigsen, Alexander and Broxup Marie., The Islamic Threat to Soviet States, (London, Groom Elm 1983).
- Belemitsky, Alexander., Central Asia [Geneva and New York, 1968].
- Brills, E.J., Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1913-36, vol., VII and VIII.
- Curzon, George H., Russia in Central Asia, (London, 1889).

- Dani, Ahmad Hasan., New Light on Central Asia. (Delhi, Renaissance Publication House, 1993).
- Dennis, J. Dunn., Religion and Modernization in Soviet Union, [U.S.A., Colorado, West View Press, 1977]
- Edward A., Allworth., The Modern Uzbeks. (Hoover Institutions Press, 1991).
- Esposito, John. L., Islam in Asia, Religion, Politics, and Society. (New York Oxford University Press, 1987).
- Gibb, HAR., The Arab Conquest in Central Asia. (New York, 1923).
- Gorbachev, Mikhail., Perestroika : New Thinking for our Country and the World, (London Fontana, 1988).
- Guha, Amalendu (ed.), Central Asia: Movement of Peoples and ideas from Times pre-Historic to Modern, (ICCR, Vikas Publishers, 1970).
- Hambly, Gavin., Central Asia (U.K., Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969).
- Haghighyeghi, Mehrdad, Islam and Politics in Central Asia, (New York, St. Martin Press, 1996).
- Hayward, Max ed. al. eds., Religion and Soviet State (London, Pall Mall Press, 1969).
- Hiro, Dilip., Between Marx and Muhammad: The changing Face of Central Asia, (London, Harper Collins Publishers, 1994).
- Islamic Fundamentalism-Holy wars : The rise of Islamic Fundamentalism. (New York, Routledge, 1989).

- Kaushik, Devendra., Central Asia in Modern Times: A History from the early 19th Century, (Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1970).
- Krader, L., Peoples of Central Asia, (Indiana University, Vol. 16, 1966).
- Lansdell, Henry., Russian Central Asia Including Kuldja, Bukhara, Khiva And Merv. [London's Law, 1885], 2 Vols.
- Lenin V.I., Collected Works, Vol. VI [Moscow Progress Publication. Moscow-1962].
- Malik, Hafeez (ed.) Central Asia: Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects, (Mac Millan Press Ltd., 1994).
- Norbu, Dawa ed. al. eds., Ethnicity and Politics in Central Asia, (Delhi, South Asia Publications, 1992).
- Patnaik, Ajay., (ed.), Common Wealth of Independent States, (New Delhi, 1995)
- _____, Central Asia: Between Modernity and Tradition, New Delhi., 1996)
- Peter Ferdinand (ed.), The New Central Asia and its Neighbours, (London, Printer Publishers, 1994).
- Pierce, Richard A., Russian Central Asia, 1867-1917: A Study in Colonial Rule, (Burkely University of California Press, 1960).
- Rahul Ram., Major Perspective. (New Delhi, Vikas Publication, 1993).
- _____, Politics of Central Asia. (New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1973).

- _____, Central Asia: A Historical Survey, (New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1996)
- _____, China, Russia and Central Asia, (New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 1995).
- Rashid Ahmad., The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism. (Karachi, Oxford University Press, 1994).
- Rywkin Michael., Moscow's Muslim Challenge, (London, 1982)
- _____, Russia in Central Asia, (London, New York, 1963).
- Shams-ud-din., Secularization in The USSR; A Study of Soviet Cultural Policy in Uzbekistan, (New Delhi, Vikas Publishers, 1982).
- Stalin J.V., Collected Works - Vol.II [Moscow Progress Publishers Moscow-1969].
- UNESCO, History of the Civilization of Central Asia, (France 1996) ed. B.A. Litvinsky Vol. II, III.
- Vaidyanath R., The Formation of Soviet Central Asian Republics, 1917-1936 (New Delhi, Peoples Publishing House, 1967).
- Warikoo K. (ed.) Central Asia : Emerging New Order, (New Delhi, Har Anand Publications, 1995).
- Wayper, C.L. Political Thought. New Delhi. B.I. Publications, 1974)
- Wheeler G., The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia, (London, 1964).
- Wheeler G., The Peoples of Soviet Central Asia. (London Bodley Head, 1966)

II. ARTICLES

- Abidi, A.H.H.. "Iran and Central Asian States". WORLD FOCUS, New Delhi, Vol. 14, No. 3-4, (March-April 1993), p.45-48.
- "Iran and Central Asian Republics: Interests and Approaches" Strategic Analysis, (New Delhi) Vol. 18, No.3, June 1995. pp. 375-386.
- Benningesen Alexander- "Islam in Retrospect" Central Asian Survey, Vol.8, No.1, 1989, pp. 34-56.
- Batty M.A., "Impact of Central Asian Changes in South and West Asia". Regional Studies, (Islamabad, Spring 1992), pp. 123-27.
- Brown James, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Turkey". Journal of Political and Military Sociology, pp.51-69.
- Cavin James, "Independent Central Asia", Current History, Vol. 93, No. 582, (April 1984), pp. 160-63.
- Dobson Richard B., "Islam in Central Asia - Findings from National Surveys" Central Asian Monitor, No.2, 1994, pp. 17-22.
- Fuller Graham E., "Central Asian - The Quest for Identity", Current History, Vol. 93, No. 582, (April 1994), pp. 145-49.
- Hunter Shireen, "The Muslim Republics of Former Soviet Union, Policy Challenges for the United States", Washington Quarterly, Vol. 15, No.3, pp. 57-71.

- Haghighat Mehrdad, "Islamic Revivalism in Central Asian Republics", Central Asian Survey. (London, 1994) Vol. 13., No. 2. pp. 249-66.
- Hiro Dilip, "Islamist Strengths and Weaknesses in Central Asia" Middle East International, February, 1993, pp. 20-21.
- Kedzie K. Christopher, "Religion and Ethnicity in Central Asia". Central Asian Monitor, 1992, pp. 14-19.
- Naby Eden, "Ethnicity and Islam in Central Asia", Central Asian Survey, Vol. 22, No.2, 1993, pp. 151-67.
- Naumkin Vitaly, "Islam in the states of the former Soviet Union". Annals, Vol. 524, November 1992.
- Stobdan P., "Islamic Reawakening in Central Asia". Towards stability or conflict, Strategic Analysis (IDSA, New Delhi) Vol. 15, No. 6, September 1992, pp. 503-18.
- Warikoo K., "Emerging order in Central Asia", World Focus (New Delhi) Vol. 14, No. 3-4, March-April, 1993, pp. 7-11.
- Wimbush S., Enders, "The Muslim Ferment in Soviet Central Asia", Global Affairs. Vol. 12. No. 3, Summer 1987, pp. 105-118.

III. JOURNAL AND MAGAZINES

Asian Affairs	,	London
Asian Survey	,	California
Central Asian Monitor	,	Amherst
Central Asian Survey	,	London
Central Asian Studies	,	London
Far Eastern economic review	,	Hongkong
Foreign Affairs	,	New York
International Relations	,	London
Journal of Central Asia	,	Islamabad.
Middle East International	,	London
Orbis	,	London
Post Soviet Affairs	,	Columbia
Summary of World Broadcast	,	BBC
Seminar	,	New Delhi
Strategic Analysis	,	New Delhi
The Current Digest of Soviet Press	,	Ohio
World Focus	-	New Delhi
World Affairs	-	New Delhi
Washington Quarterly	-	New York. IV.

NEWS PAPERS

Observer	-	London
The Hindustan Time	-	New Delhi
The Hindu	-	Madras
The Times	-	London