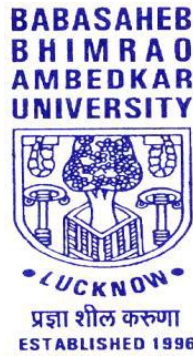


**Colonialism and Modern Education in India:
A Study of Kashmir, 1880-1947**

**Summary of
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Colonialism brought marked changes in the socio-economic structures of Indian subcontinent. Its impact on education system is crucial as the latter acted as a driving force behind the various lasting changes that colonial India witnessed. Despite the fact that there is admirably growing research in the field of the history of education in colonial and post-colonial India, sufficient light has not been shed on the educational developments of princely India. This sometimes led to a dangerous assumption that changes similar to that of British-India had been witnessed there also, but many times forcing an uncritical understanding that princely India was immune to such changes and therefore remained backward. Such an understanding only reinforced the imperialistic idea of Oriental Despotism in a subtle way.

By undertaking a full length study of the educational and accompanying developments in the princely state of Kashmir my present research attempts at filling a gap. Main objective of the study is to track the educational developments of Kashmir during the Dogra period along the caste/class/gender axis and to examine the consequent contestations. The study also analyzes the colonial intervention and its impact on the development of modern education in Kashmir. The study is primarily based on primary sources mostly available in Jammu and Kashmir State Archives and National Archives of India.

Kashmir, which was ruled by the autocratic Dogra rulers, did not see the ray of modern education until the advent of Christian missionaries on the scene in the 1880s. Early Maharajas, especially Maharaja Ranbir Singh, promoted classical learning, particularly Sanskrit teaching. This was just to maintain the hierarchy of the patron-client relationship between *guru* and the Raja as elaborated in Chapter II.

During the last decade of the 19th century educational system of Kashmir underwent a dramatic change due to the role of Council of State, under the British Resident, coupled with strenuous efforts of Christian missionaries. Education became a central component of the State's drive towards centralisation and bureaucratization along the lines of British India. The model selected for the education system in Kashmir was of neighbouring Punjab. Therefore, as found in Chapter III, the policy of education was inspired by the colonial principles, which was based on the downward filtration theory. The bureaucracy, which was imported from the Punjab and Bengal, refused to extend education beyond some elite classes; they erroneously presumed that extension of education to poor masses would not be welcomed.

The state did not intend to keep poor masses uneducated, however. It was interested in imparting to them a different type of education. State wanted to introduce education system

which would improve the productive capacity and occupational skills of the poor masses. This was possible only if technical education was imparted to the agriculturists and artisans with a view to making them more efficient in their respective occupations. Consequently, technical institutes were established in different parts of state. The trades introduced in these institutes were causal in nature. These institutes were not popular among the masses because the training infrastructure and personnel were not efficient. Thus, the major aim of these institutions was to make the students more manual labours than the skilled professionals. In the similar vein, rudimentary agriculture education was introduced in village schools to make the pupils familiar with the agricultural practices.

Higher education was altogether neglected; it was only in 1905 that some Kashmiri Pundits, with the support of Anne Besant, were able to lay the foundation of a college. But, the apprehensions of the colonial government and the Curzon's higher education policy forced the State Council to take over the college under its own control. The lone college in valley with insufficient infrastructure and inefficient staff was not able to fulfil the needs of higher education in valley.

In 1916, there was direct involvement of Government of India when Mr H. Sharp, Educational Commissioner of the Government of India, was appointed to look into the fragile system of education in Kashmir. In a colonial rhetoric, he stated that due to agro-based economy of Kashmir, modern curriculum had no value for them. Maintaining the colonial focus on class, the report pointed out that poverty and the agricultural basis of Kashmiri Muslims was the reason for the lack of literacy among them. Therefore, he also recommended institutionalisation of technical education in state. It was due to the colonial intervention that education system of Kashmir was streamlined. But, it may not be out of place to mention here that the intervention of the colonial state was politically motivated which benefited the Valley to some extent.

Maharaja Hari Singh, the successor of Pratap Singh, came out with certain reforms in the state education system. Much applauded step in this direction was the legislation of free and compulsory primary education to be introduced in certain specific areas. Although extraordinary in relative terms, this step was based on class and gender prejudice, excluding lower castes and girls in its plan. In fact, its aim was to educate the urban elite of cities and towns, leaving all marginalised sections of both urban and rural areas including girl students.

Although numerically educational facilities increased during this period, there were innumerable problems which the system faced. Problems like wastage and stagnation, unavailability of teachers' training, conjunction in schools, lack of systematic inspection, etc., did not allow the normal literacy to develop. Even in 1939, there was only one training institute in the whole of the state, giving poor quality of the training to the admitted teachers. The low salary of teachers, a colonial principle, ensured that school jobs would not attract the kind of young men who might consciously work to develop a pedagogic creed to the changing socio-economic milieu. On one hand, teachers' status was degraded and on the other their supremacy over students was maintained which made students more feeble beings without any creative thought.

The appointment of the Education Reorganization Committee in 1939 was an important development in the annals of educational history of Kashmir. The Committee, for the first time, investigated the complex problems of school education like problem of inspection, pay anomaly of teachers, problem of teacher training and so on. But, the Committee basically laid stress on the manual labour and made students more attractive to craftsmanship rather than to the academics.

The indifference of Muslims to secular education system has been debatable. The conventional view that Muslims were averse to modern education because of religious conservatism has been challenged. Looking in the context of Kashmir, one gets the same impressions from most of our scholarship about its Muslim community. However, the condition of Muslims, except a few, had been deplorable due to their acute poverty and exploitive policies of Dogra Maharajas, which did not allow them to receive education and even religious education. There is no denying of the fact that Muslim clergy also discouraged their community towards English education. But State policies also played no less important role in the backwardness of Muslims in education. In fact, the State did not take the responsibility to educate their masses in a serious manner; different recommendations of the appointed committees were not implemented in proper way.

Towards the beginning of Hari Singh's reign, a class of Muslim elite, under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, emerged which clearly framed its demands and pressurised the government for reforms. The decade of 1930s gave a push to the Muslims political awakening. As a result, the Muslim Conference, later rechristened as National Conference, emerged as the sole representative of Muslims, which politicized the discourse of education. The leaders stressed upon the government to realize its responsibility of promoting education

among its subjects. No doubt, it was more a leadership rhetoric; however, it had immense impact on the education of Muslims. As statistical analysis depicts in Chapter–V, that there was a considerable increase in the number of Muslim students in the state and aided schools.

One more important variable which has correlation with education was employment. At the earlier stage, Kashmiris, irrespective of their communities, were ignored in the state services, the whole bureaucracy being imported from the British Indian states. Later, some Kashmiri Pandits were appointed in clerical positions. In order to secure their rights, a movement known as “Kashmir for Kashmiris” was organized by Kashmiri Pandits who formed the bulk of educated population. After a number of committees appointed by the government, the situation was ameliorated to a certain extent. However, it did not make any difference to Kashmiri Muslims, who have been totally ignored in state services from the very inception. Thus, the underrepresentation of Muslims in state services did not support the causes of their being backward in education in general and higher education in particular.

Since the colonial state was the Dogra state’s main inspiration, the ambiguities and inconsistencies in British Education and language policies could also be noted in Kashmir. Urdu, the least spoken language, was made medium of instruction which affected the expansion of education to a large extent. Instead of developing the regional tongue, the Dogra state boosted up Urdu as it treated Urdu synonymous with Muslim education and Hindi with the education of Hindus, developing parallel system of “vernacular” education, such as in North Western Provinces, ignoring the glaring fact that neither Kashmiri Hindus nor Kashmiri Muslims spoke anything other than their regional vernacular, Kashmiri, in either their homes or places of business. Surprisingly, the Kashmiri leadership, both Hindu and Muslim, did not support the cause of Kashmiri as a medium of instruction in schools, because of their vested interests.

In the 1940s, government made the problem more complex by introducing a dual script of Devangri and Persian. Thus, government was able to play the communal card, the probable reason was that it wanted to pacify Hindu opinion, which had been increasingly rancorous over the past decade against the State’s so called pro-Muslim policies. Kashmiri language thus became a victim of the interests of the Kashmiri leadership and complete unwillingness on the part of State and leadership to implement the mother tongue as medium of instruction was in large part responsible for high illiteracy rate among Kashmiri Muslims.

Discrimination on the basis of gender has been a feature of colonial education policy. The Valley of Kashmir was also most backward in girls’ education. Until the beginning of 20th

century, there was no definite policy of government for girls' education. They have deliberately left it, owing to the public prejudice. Until 1928, management of the government girls' schools was left largely to advisory committees, private managing bodies composed of leading members of religious communities, and schools themselves were connected to particular communities. State was apprehensive that communities would perceive state's interference in women's education as an attack on their religious sensibilities. Religious prejudice of the people of Kashmir and their prejudice against education, especially of females, were cited as a reason for placing of the education of girls in the hands of advisory committees. However, these committees remained in the charge of the education department and conducted supervision over the general work of the schools with the rules sanctioned by the Education Minister for the purpose. This gave state sanction to overtly religious policies recommended by the advisory committees, such as closing Muslim girls' schools on Fridays instead of Sundays for the reason that women were supposed to be more religious and moral.

The curriculum introduced in the girls' school was aimed to inculcate the concept of home-industry among the students. Subjects like needle work, household work, tailoring, sweeping, reading of literary and religious books, besides some arithmetic were taught. Thus by education, women were tied more securely to domestic tasks by realigning patriarchal domesticity. Although Hari Singh brought the control of girls' education under the newly carved girls' education department, he seems to be ambivalent when girls were excluded from the Compulsory Education Act of 1930. Moreover, girls were totally excluded from higher and technical education due to the absence of these institutions for them. The state's expenditure on education of girls was far less as compared to boys' education.

The role of private agencies had been pivotal in the dissemination of modern education in India. Among them, Christian missionaries played a significant role. In Kashmir, it was because of Church Missionary Society London (CMS) that the foundations of modern education were laid. In fact, they became the role model for the state schools in the policies of education. They had faced a number of problems on account of the intimidating attitude of the early Dogra rulers. However, the missionaries put up bold resistance to all such odds and carried their mission forward. Participation in the mission schools was limited to the elite sections of the society, especially the Pandits. Moreover, the missionary activities remained confined to Srinagar city for a long time, ignoring the large part of the Valley.

The reform movements led by the Hindu and Muslim leaders gave a fillip to the expansion of education. These movements did not go beyond their respective communities, and often

gave communal colour to their programmes of action. The government's initial approach was hostile to the private agencies, particularly towards Christian missionaries. However, latter on, they followed the colonial policy of grant-in-aid to the private institutions. In this way, government was able to execute their rules and regulations on the aided institutions. Notwithstanding the contribution of government and non-government agencies to the development of education, the situation of education on the eve of partition was worse, which could be established from the fact that literacy rate of Jammu and Kashmir was just 5% or 6%. Thus, it becomes clear that Kashmir, although controlled indirectly, witnessed the colonial complexities in its educational development.