



NATURE OF DOGRA STATE TOWARDS THE EDUCATIONAL HEALTH OF MUSLIMS IN VALE KASHMIR.

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ABSTRACT

Education is looked upon as a means of raising the social status of an individual in various ways. The paper attempts to show the nature of Dogra state and also exposed enquires into the stereotype of Muslim apathy to modern education due to their religious conservatism. It shows relationship between the Dogra State, Muslims, and educational development in Kashmir. It examines the State's responsibility of educating the Kashmiri Muslims. It shows that relative deprivation of Muslims in different opportunities led them to poverty and illiteracy among them. The paper finds that Muslims did not see education as necessarily translating into formal employment. The first part of the paper throws ample light on the attitude of Dogra state towards the development of education in Kashmir. Second part examines the attitude of Muslims to modern education. It examines the indifferent role of state vis-à-vis education of Muslims. The paper concludes with the dismal educational condition of Jammu and Kashmir in general and Muslims in particular, which can be said is the legacy it inherited from the Dogra state.

Keywords: *Discrimination, Dogra State, Kashmir, Muslim Education, poverty.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Ancient Kashmir is said to have been the seat of Sanskrit learning and “from this small valley have issued master-pieces of history, poetry, romance, fable and philosophy.” It remained for centuries the home of great Sanskrit scholars and at least one influential form of Hinduism, Saivism, “has founded some of its most eloquent teachers on the banks of Vitasta. Some of the greatest Sanskrit poets were born and wrote in the Valley.”¹ Alberuni said that “the Banaras and Kashmir are high schools of Hindu science.” It is Kashmir that produced the greatest historian, poets and philosophers.²

Maharaja Gulab Singh (1846-1857), the first Dogra ruler of the state made no efforts to educate the masses³ like other parts of country. Traditionally education in the state of Jammu and Kashmir was imparted through indigenous institutions. In case of Muslims these indigenous institutions were connected with the mosques, where the boys were taught to read Arabic so that they may able to read Quran. Likewise Brahmins had their indigenous institutions, where Sanskrit was taught so that boys may able to read their sacred Hindu religious books. With these two languages Arabic and Sanskrit, Persian was also added and then certain amount of arithmetic was taught. There were no regular schools and pathshalas⁴. Modern education does not seem to have its existence in Kashmir until the advent of the Christian Missionaries when a changed outlook gradually came into being. With the passage of time, the state also followed the suit and founded various schools. However, surprisingly, Muslims remained illiterate and did not take the advantage of the new system of education.⁵



II.OBJECTIVES

- To know the attitude of Dogra rulers towards the education of Muslims in Kashmir.
- To know the absence of prominent center's of learning.
- To know the causes for the educational backwardness of Muslims in Dogra state.

III.METHODOLOGY

The research work is based on wide range of sources, both conventional and non-conventional. The conventional sources especially comprise of primary sources viz., fieldwork, oral history, archival sources, travel accounts, official records and reports, census reports, and other records of the present. Short interviews were conducted to gather information for making the arguments sound.

IV.NATURE OF DOGRA RULERS

The worst feature of the Dogra rule was its communal outlook. It discriminated the Muslims on the basis of their religion and also interfered in their religious affairs. The Dogra State was actually a Hindu State and its rulers tried their best to broaden its Hindu nature, with the result Kashmiri Pandits as a co-religionists' class found it easy to get associated with it and the Muslims were marginalized.⁶ Regarding the nature of the Dogra Government, P. N. Bazaz, declared in 1941: "Speaking generally and from the bourgeois point of view, the Dogra rule has been a Hindu Raj. Muslims have not been treated fairly, by which I mean as fairly as the Hindus. Firstly, because, contrary to all professions of treating all classes equally, it must be candidly admitted that Muslims were dealt with harshly in certain respects only because they were Muslims."⁷ It is reported that Gulab Singh in 1850, made a plan to reconvert the Muslims, but, the Banaras priests did not accept it, as according to them it would dilute the purity of Hinduism.⁸ In fact, in 1846, he made it clear that he would not allow Muslims to practice all their religious practices and that as a Hindu; he would have to give priority to the religion of Hindus.⁹ In order to prove it a Hindu State he invaded Muslim places and erected temples.¹⁰ A large number of Muslim shrines and mosques were confiscated and declared State property, like Pather Masjid, Khanqah Sokhta, Khanqah Bulbulshah, Khanqah Darashikoh, Idgah and so on in Srinagar and Khanqah Sufi Shah and Bahu Mosque in Jammu.¹¹ In order to check the spread of Islam, a law was promulgated by the Government by which if a Hindu converted to Islam, he was debarred from the right of inheritance and in case of vice versa, he could attain the right of inheritance.¹² In case of conversion to Islam they were subjected to various difficulties and inconveniences by local officials.¹³ For a small minority, the rest majority was not allowed to slaughter cow, ox etc. Cow killing was banned and those who found guilty were severely punished. First the punishment was death sentence but later on it was reduced to life imprisonment¹⁴ and then 7 years of imprisonment.¹⁵ It is necessary here to mention that there were frequent famines in Kashmir and scarcity of food, they had no alternative but to slaughter their own cattle, but it was not allowed.¹⁶ In the second decade of twentieth century, there were 117 prisoners in Kashmir, out of which 99 were Muslims, being punished for killing cows.¹⁷ Ranbir Singh also closed the Friday market at Jama Masjid in Srinagar and opened a new market called Maharaja Gunj.¹⁸ Even the Muslim names were not tolerated and many Muslim names were changed into Hindu names; like Islamabad into Anantnag, Takt-i-Sulimani into Shankaracharya.¹⁹ After ascending the throne in 1885, Pratap Singh assured that no discrimination would be made between his subjects.²⁰ But he could not fulfil his promise and came under the



influence of Hindu religion and all his functions which were participated by military and civil officials, had religious tinge.²¹ In fact, he said, "Do not give too much to Rajputs, use Kashmiri Pandits as much as you can and see that the Muslims do not starve."²² He would not tolerate to see the face of a Muslim (till noon) and the shade of a Muslim over the water, which was brought from Cheshma Shahi Srinagar for him, and the guilty was punished and imprisoned.²³ Maharaja Hari Singh discouraged the business of Muslims and Muslim contractors. Instead of encouraging local contractors, the Maharaja encouraged the high contractors from outside and gave them loans without any interest.²⁴

V. ATTITUDE OF DOGRA RULERS

Maharaja Gulab Singh spent most of his time in consolidating his territories; he was having neither time nor any interest to give new shape to the existing system of education.²⁵ His successor Maharaja Ranbir Singh patronized Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit learning, the education of the masses remained in an extremely low state.²⁶ The educational institutions classed as Maktabas and Patshalas often provided only religious instruction of a very limited type and they cannot, therefore, strictly speaking be classed among institutions engaged in promoting general education.²⁷

On the one hand state did not take steps to spread the new type of education and on the other hand it left no stone unturned to oppose the attempts of Christian Missionaries, the pioneers of modern medical and educational amenities in Kashmir²⁷. Mridu Rai argued that although Maharaja Ranbir Singh donated a handsome amount of Rs, 62,500.00 in 1869 for the establishment of Punjab University, his donations were far in excess of those of the Maharajas, Chiefs and people of the Punjab. The irony of the situation is that it was not until the early twentieth century that the Dogra Maharajas would fund the establishment of institutions for higher education in their own state of Jammu and Kashmir.²⁸ Maharaja Pratap Singh succeeded the Ranbir Singh, due to the intervention of British²⁹ some steps were taken to spread education among the Kashmiris³⁰. Since the Dogra state was ill equipped and unwilling to take on this responsibility, its educational policies in this period were fought with ambivalence towards mass education in general and education of Muslims in particular³¹. Muslims like their brethren in British India remained indifferent to new system of education which was laid by the Christian missionaries and later by the state. According to Walter Lawrence, the settlement officer, Muslims of Kashmir were most backward in education. In the year 1891-92 he had given us the following statistical data about the education in Kashmir.³²

Condition of Education in Kashmir in the year 1891-92.

01	Number of boys on roll	1585
02	Average daily attendance	1228
03	Number of students learning English	229
04	Number of students vernacular only	1541
05	Number of students Sanskrit only	44
06	Number of students from different religions	-----
07	Hindus	1327
08	Muslims	233



09	Sikhs	21
10	Others	04

Source:- W. R. Lawrence, the Valley of Kashmir, Chinara Publishing House, Srinagar, 1992.

These figure shows that though the Hindus form less than 7% of population, they monopolize over 83% of education facilities created by the state, while out of a population of 757433 only 233 Muslims could obtain any benefit from the state schools. By the early 20th century however, the state began to present itself as the promoter of education among its subjects, translated into actual government policy. This meant the rapid creation and consolidation of the state's educational bureaucracy as the school curricula in the state were reorganized along the lines of the Punjab University syllabus.³³

The year 1905 was a landmark in the progress of education in Kashmir. It was in this year that, with the efforts of Dr. Annie Besant, a college, affiliated to Banaras Hindu University was set up in Srinagar.³⁴ On July 1911, the college was taken over by the state and came to be known as Sri Pratap College.³⁵ By 1907, it had become clear that the state was lagging behind in developing schemes to impart education to the vast majority of its subjects, as it considered education to be the preserve of the elite. The state's acceptance of the idea that education should be restricted to the upper tier in the society is reflected in the Education Minister's negative response to the Maharaja's directive that he draws a scheme for free and compulsory education in the state. The Education Minister rejected the idea of primary education on the grounds that such a measure would be seen as tyrannical by the majority of the Kashmiri population, which was not aware of the duties of citizenship. The Minister stated that if the wage earning children of uneducated parents were forced to go to schools, the parents would consider it "Zoolum" (tyranny).³⁶ According to the state, then it is not the responsibility of the state to educate the people, instead community leaders should encourage education among the respective communities. The Inspector of Schools suggested that the low caste Kashmiri Muslims (Meghs and Doms) should be taken away from the compulsory primary education because the upper caste students did not like to study with the lower caste children.³⁷

VI. CAUSES FOR THE EDUCATIONAL BACKWARDNESS OF MUSLIMS

Many causes have been put forward for this backwardness. According to Lawrence, the Muslim villagers preferred Masjid schools, and stressed on moral education.³⁸ There was also apprehension about the Christian missionary schools.³⁹ But the main cause was the indifferent nature of the government towards the education of the Muslims.⁴⁰ As the services of the Government were closed to them, they did not send their children to schools⁴¹ for even after getting education they would remain unemployed.⁴² Bazaz, a Kashmiri Pandit criticised the Dogra Government for its indifferent behaviour towards education among the Muslims and not working for the welfare of Kashmiri Muslims and held the Government responsible for the backwardness of Muslims.⁴³ Out of 2 ½ crore income, only 15 lakh were spent on education.⁴⁴ But mostly non-Muslims were benefited from this expenditure because of their dominant presence both as teachers and students.⁴⁵ Moreover schools were not established in those areas where Muslims were in clean majority. Ironically, the schools in the Muslim areas were shifted to non-Muslim areas. The aid given to Muslim schools was lower than given to other schools.⁴⁶ In 1891-92 the condition of education was like this. Out of a population of 52,576 Hindus, 1327 were receiving



State education and out of 757,433 Muslims, only 233 obtained benefit from the State schools. That is although the Hindus formed only 7 per cent of the population, they had monopolies over 83 per cent of the education bestowed by the state.⁴⁷ The doors of employment for Muslims were closed even if a Muslim was qualified, he was not employed and if employed he was given a low job and less pay as compared to his Hindu counterpart having the same qualification.⁴⁸ Thus because of their inadequate representation in Government departments Muslims had to suffer in various ways. As Bazaz, observed: "In educational department, Muslims felt that the Hindu teachers and officials would not take as much interest in the spread of education among them as it was necessary. In medical department also Muslim patients did not receive as much care as the Hindus. In the offices and courts Muslim clients were shabbily treated while the cases of Hindus were expeditiously described."⁴⁹ In 1924 when the Viceroy, Lord Reading visited Kashmir a memorandum was presented to him regarding the sufferings of Muslims by some Muslim representatives, in which they demanded, *inter alia*, the abolition of *begar*, better educational facilities, good representation of Muslims in the State services, release of religious places, buildings and the proprietary rights to the peasants.⁵⁰ The State Government did not tolerate it and the signatories were severely punished. Saad-ud-Din Shawl was banished from Kashmir, Khawaja Hassan Shah lost his jagir, Hassan Shah Jalali was dismissed from the office of *zaildar*.

In the late 1920s, when Indians were preparing for the Civil Disobedience Movement, Purna Swaraj, and the Britishers were ready to give more constitutional concessions to Indians, the Kashmiris were still labouring under many disadvantages. Officially their disadvantages were known to the outside world by Sir Albion Bannerji. Sir Albion Bannerji, the Foreign and Political Minister of Kashmir, resigned on 15th March, 1929 and in a press statement at Lahore exposed the autocratic Dogra rule and the impoverished conditions of Muslims of Kashmir. Leveling the serious allegations against the Dogra rule, he said: "Jammu and Kashmir State is laboring under many disadvantages, with a large Muhammeden population absolutely illiterate, laboring under poverty and very low economic conditions in living in the villages and practically governed like dumb driven cattle. There is no touch between the Government and the people, no suitable opportunity for representing grievances and the administrative machinery itself requires overhauling from top to bottom to bring it up to the modern conditions of efficiency. It has at present little or no sympathy with the people's wants and grievances."⁵¹

VII. CONCLUSION

This was the picture of the nature of Dogra rulers towards the educational health of Muslims in Kashmir. With the beginning of the 20th century, education was spreading among Muslims, but it was limited to the upper strata of the society. Lower classes (Doms and Meghs) were not allowed to sit with the upper classes of the Muslim society. Different educational commissions and conferences were held from time to time by the state, but the recommendations made were hardly materialized by the state owing to its unwillingness. The state repeatedly moves away from its responsibility and blames Muslim leadership for its backwardness in education. By promoting languages most suited for religious instruction at the expense of Kashmiri, the state created a gap between education and the public space. It must be said that if there had been a ruler whose chief concern were the welfare and educational development of the people, instead of the exaction of money, the position would have been different.



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