



Peripheral Progress: Kashmiri Woman's Emancipation through Education and Modernisation

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Abstract

Kashmiri woman has been a *topos oblige* of beauty, admiration, and inadequate emancipation. Amid a vast body of literature on Kashmir, she has hardly been paid the deserved attention. Central to the tensions and trajectories tracing the history of region's modernity, her history of modernity and emancipation tends to be the least concern. Taking modernisation and emancipation into consideration, this paper aims to locate the history of forces of Kashmir's modernisation unleashed in a colonial context and how the trope of woman emancipation unfolded. The paper argues that woman emancipation began under colonial supervision and subsequently was superseded by halfhearted efforts of a princely dynasty of the time, evangelical organisations, reform movements, political awakening, government initiatives and post-independent reform movements.

Keywords: Kashmiri woman, Modernisation, Education, Emancipation

Introduction

Most of the scholarly writings on Kashmir tend to be unanimous in arguing that the creation of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1846 was the first profound step towards its modernisation.¹ The rationale being that the princely state came into existence under the aegis of British Raj which eventually proved a path-breaking force in modernising Kashmir. The presumed tale of modernity has, however, been told differently. In the overtly oversimplified accounts, it is being argued that the colonial state and its colonial way of functioning had made it a progressive force or slightly bit more advanced or modernised than the things native. By being bit advanced, reformed or improved, whether in practice or theory or only in colonial narratives, the colonial state was able to distinguish itself from the rest of India suffering under the native rulers. The disillusioned feelings about being

¹C. Zutshi, (Ed.), *Kashmir: history, politics, representation*. (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p.7.



under native princes created conditions that compelled native states to copy or follow the footsteps of British India.² This makes the entire process or progress a borrowed concept of colonial modernity.³ The logic often reiterated for such borrowings would make British India a kind of reference point or role model that princely order in India was bound to emulate, appreciate and possibly desire to copy and cultivate in their princely states. This tendency to be advanced and enlightened would bespeak the superiority of British India and make obvious the flaws and freakiness of native rule, lacking the potential to be resilient and reasonable to evolve on its own or accommodate changes. The Eurocentric vision of history that desired British Raj to be viewed and weighed as a dynamic and a harbinger of a great multitude of changes or fulfilling the promise of civilising the uncivilised,⁴ paying off the price and promise of being bound by the white man's burden theory⁵ has widely been accepted even in the Kashmir context. Simultaneously such a perspective deprives the native princely state of its agency or ability to grow on its own or irrespective of overshadowing patronage of British paramountcy.

In the beginning, central to the trope of the formation of modern Kashmir colonial state's contribution figured prominently. The prominence assigned to the British intervention in the region emanates from the rationale that the princely state arose under the auspices of the British Raj, which helped to create new structures, transformed the political economy and cartographic contours of the state⁶ and all eventually proved a game-changer force and factor in modernising Kashmir.

Another aspect of this modernity tale is influenced by regionalism prevailing in the state. The Jammu-based historical writings with a tendency to romanticise things revolving round the Dogra dynasty treat the very imposition of Dogra rule as its first step towards the beginning of a new era. Such remarks would figure that the formation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir under a single

²William Digby, *Condemned Unheard*, (London: Indian Political Agency, 1890), pp. 138-39; see also, C. Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and the Making of Kashmir*, (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003), p. 75.

³Some colonial policies were resisted and transformed even before implementation; in other instances, particularly in the realm of administrative bureaucracy, the Dogra rulers sought to emulate their colonial masters. These policies, whether initiated by the Dogras or the British, or as a compromise between the two, led to changes in the political economy of the Valley that had a far-reaching impact on not only its political and economic structures, but also relationships within and between communities.

⁴Geraldine Forbes, *Women in Modern India*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 12-13.

⁵Joan Wallach Scott, *On the Judgement of History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), p. xx.

⁶Chitralekha Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, pp. 58-59.



power of Dogras was the first significant step towards modernity.⁷ Further, it has been argued that the appointment of British resident during Maharaja Pratap Singh is a landmark in the history of modern Kashmir.⁸ And in response to this historical trend, the Kashmir valley-based historical writings would focus on Sheikh Abdullah and his family as the protagonist character that compelled Dogra Maharaja's to embark on the path of reforms. The argument put forward by such a shade of historians is that it was the emergence of popular consciousness under the leadership of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah that ushered modernity in the Kashmir region.⁹ Further, 1953 has been identified as the 'Golden Age' due to economic growth and advancement, and Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad's rule as the beginning of modernisation in Kashmir.¹⁰

The contemporary colonial constructions have tread along a more or less missionary role in arguing colonialism in Kashmir context was a period of great changes and quite emancipatory. And more recently, in the scholarly attention paid to Kashmir in the aftermath of the armed struggle that erupted in Kashmir towards the end of the 20th century, the colonial period was presumed as the pivotal in the genesis of roots of the current political crisis in Kashmir.¹¹ From all these oversimplifications, it becomes evident that in this narrative of peripheral progress, the narrative of emancipation and modernisation of Kashmiri woman has remained a marginal aspect; either ignored or put in frames that sounds quite bizarre. This paper, as such, aims to address the question of the modernisation of the princely state with a special focus on the woman. Whether this modernisation improved the lives of the woman in Kashmir or whether they continued to suffer the same maltreatment they had suffered from the very distant past is being addressed. Simultaneously an attempt is being made to comprehend how and what forces resulted in the emergence and emancipation of Kashmiri woman. The 20th century is a more complex century for unleashing an end number of enlightened forces and factors that to a certain degree, help develop ideas about woman's emancipation in the valley. The

⁷ Alastair Lamb, *The Kashmir Problem: A Historical Survey*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), p. 24.

⁸ P.N. Bazaz, *Daughters of Vitasta: A History of Kashmiri Women from Early Times to the Present Day*, (New Delhi: Pamposh Publications, 1959), p.19; see also, P.N.K. Bamzai, *Culture and political History of Kashmir*, vol 3, (New Delhi: M D Publication Pvt. Ltd, 1994), p. 693.

⁹ Altaf Hussain Para, *The Making of Modern Kashmir: Sheikh Abdullah and the Politics of Kashmir*, (New York: Routledge, 2019), p. 2.

¹⁰ Shahla Hussain, *Kashmir in the Aftermath of Partition*, (New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2021), p. 134.

¹¹ Zutshi, *Kashmir, History, Politics, Representation*, p. 2.



state that came into existence through the *treaty of Amritsar*,¹² termed as sale deed treaty, was perhaps only the political transaction, in which a pro-British Jammu-based dynasty, in a collaborative system with a vision to resurrect a check and balanced system, was established.¹³ As a matter of fact, the valley of Kashmir remained by and large unaltered. During the period when law and order was instituted with the active participation of Kashmiri Pandits on the ground level, not much changed. But this was accompanied by the fact that most Kashmiris suffered extreme poverty and their rights were totally denied.¹⁴ The path to modernisation, reform, liberation and social transformation in Kashmir was far from a state priority. Whatever development took place though belatedly, was not under the aegis of a single banner, nor was it just due to colonial welfare programmes or a short-term time framework. The improvement in the position of woman that occurred was seemingly an unintentional result of reforms aimed at revitalising the sluggish Kashmir. Many attempts were brought in to attempt and modernise a traditional, backward, conservative, and unfriendly culture, with which concerns involving woman in the valley gained prominence.

During the initial years, Dogra Maharajas, especially Gulab Singh and his successor, Ranbir Singh, what took place, remained largely preoccupied by the concern to implant their rule firmly. However, how people were subjected to exhibiting taxation, how prostitute centers emerged, how every walk of life was taxed in Kashmir, and how the position of woman and the exceeding levels of poverty and exploitation deteriorated could not be figured as common concerns demanding attention. The position of Kashmiri woman seemed to have suffered horribly from a very distant past. Besides this, the patriarchal nature of Kashmiri society has also restrained her, effectively reducing them to a subhuman state. These reasons make it explicit for us to understand that women were forced to be unclean under these oppressive regimes.¹⁵ Their conditions were further worsened by the Dogra

¹²The state of Jammu and Kashmir was established in 1846 CE, with the signing of the Treaty of Amritsar between Maharaja Gulab Singh and the Britishers on March 16, 1846. The Maharaja was required to pay the British 75 lakh Nanak Shahi rupees for the state. With the signing of this treaty, the three entities of Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh unified into one entity.

¹³Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, pp. 63-65.

¹⁴P.N. Bazaz, *History of Freedom Struggle in Kashmir*, (New Delhi: Kashmir Publishing House: 1954), pp. 140-41.

¹⁵ Robert Thorpe, *Kashmir Misgovernment: An Account of the Economic and Political Oppression of the People of Kashmir by the Maharaja's Government*, (Calcutta: Wyman Bros: Hare Street, 1868), pp. 79-80.



dynasty, which for the increment of their income, encouraged the evil practice of prostitution,¹⁶ which exacerbated the deplorable condition of woman. Severe health conditions were common among these women, and no attention was paid towards their health.¹⁷ They were unable to marry or establish a respectable life, and when they die, the government used to seize their property. Even religious reformists did not speak out against the slanderous and immoral trafficking of young and innocent girls.

However, the late 19th-century developments turned the tide. The increasingly unstable Afghanistan and Russian phobia created restless nights for British authorities of India.¹⁸ Being aware of the princely state's demography and Islam as the mass religion, they feared leaving them the ruthless hands of despotism may plug in problems of great magnitude. What added more to the fears of the empire, was the formation of the Indian National Congress.¹⁹ This resulted in the shift in the colony policy of terming and treating Muslims as the only enemies on Indian soil. Prior to it, as it is being held, the publication of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's *Asbab-e-Bagawat-i-Hind*, and William Wilson Hunter's treatise, *Indian Musalmans*, had created a kind of platform for shifting the 'enemy tag' from the Muslim community.²⁰ More importantly, after the revolt of 1857, the activism of Christian Missionaries had come to a halt, as they were not allowed to preach and proselytise the people in mainland India. Consequently, the missionaries' attention shifted towards peripheral regions or places that did not threaten the colonial order. It was here that Kashmir, in the subsequent interests of time, would develop an attractive look and demand attention. The occasion for the intervention, however, came through on account of two profound attempts that severely dented the image of the British civilising mission. Robert Thorp, visited Kashmir, a maternal home for him, which he found in great distress, and his criticism of colonial policies and the Dogra dynasty was a counter-narrative of

¹⁶ Shamla Mufti, *Chilman Se Chaman*, (Srinagar: Publishing House, 2018), p. 28.

¹⁷ Shafi Ahmad Qadri, *Biscoe in Kashmir: Noble Work of a Christian Missionary in Kashmir*, (Srinagar: Gulshan Publishers, 1998), p. 85.

¹⁸ P. N. Bazaz, *Daughters of Vitasta*, p. 215, see also Alastair Lamb, *The Kashmir Problem: A Historical Survey*, pp. 24-29.

¹⁹ Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers and Muslim Subjects: Islam Rights and the History of Kashmir*, (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), p. 132.

²⁰ Following the insurrection of 1857, most British officials believed that the revolt was the idea of Muslims seeking to resurrect Muslim empires in India. This caused a schism between former East India Company officials and Muslims, resulting in hatred. However, with the passage of time, things changed, as can be seen from these two books, *Asbab-I-Bagawat-i-Hind* and *Indian Musalmans*.



colonialism,²¹ published his articles in English newspapers, which seared feelings of appeasement. Arthur Brinkman, in his work, made the colonial conditions committed against Kashmir were vivid and insightful for the metropolitan masses. Brinckman describes that “Kashmir is not a mere namedistinguishing a peculiar kind of shawl, but the beautiful territory that was sold out to the Despotism against the wishes of its people.”²²

This alarming situation and image damage demanded immediate attention. The colonial authorities developed a grip over the despotic tendencies of the Dogra Maharajas. In the aftermath of Robert Thorp’s account and Arthur Brinkman’s more vivid apathetic picture of Kashmir, it became quite obvious the colonial state had done a great inhuman service in the context of Kashmir. However, the colonial discourseruptured the colonial image of civilisation forces at work and consequently created circumstances to help improve the colonial face.²³ British colonial masters in India, under compulsion, began negotiations with the Princely state and acted more assertively. They were compelled to undertake welfare measures. The British Residency and State Council were appointed to control state affairs.²⁴ Amid the paramount pressure, the Dogra Maharaja, for the first time, paid attention to welfare measures towards the people of the princely state. The drive for centralisation along British lines was centered around education,²⁵ which was the first step taken towards modernising Kashmir, of this modernisation, the woman could take its benefits but only a little. State reforms introduced at the start of the 20th century ushered in state regulation of education system.²⁶ However, the princely state measures were limited and largely confined to the heart of Srinagar and Jammu. People primarily come from families with a history of involvement in education, which has resulted in individuals becoming well-versed and earning a share of government employment or a reputation for being literary persons. Only woman in the heartland of Srinagar that too high-class Pandits and Muslims participated in the educational endeavours.

In the second attempt to improve the image damage, situations colonial Christian missionary activism

²¹ Robert Thorp, *Cashmere Misgovernment*, (Calcutta: Wyman Bros, 1868), pp. 42-43.

²² Arthur Brinckman, *The wrongs of Cashmere: A Plea for the Deliverance of that Beautiful Country from the Slavery and Oppression under which it is going to Ruin*, (London: Thomas Bosworth, 1868), p. 3.

²³ Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, p. 4.

²⁴ P. N. Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, (Srinagar: The Kashmir publishing Co.1941), p. 80.

²⁵ Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*. p. 173.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 177.



started in Kashmir. With the arrival of missionaries, a new era of progress in the history of this land began, giving birth to modernity in the state. Christian missionaries were at the forefront of the Kashmir reform movement, particularly in terms of woman's emancipation. A number of Christian Missionaries schools and health facility centers which they believed ameliorate the conditions of the masses.²⁷ They developed missionary accounts to develop more donations and charities and tried their best to term and treat colonialism as a civilising force, doing good to the people living in the far-off places. Their activism involved many things, and their presence was a kind of check on the Dogra dynasty's despotic system. Whatever efforts they took, whatever confined their circle of activism was, they created a road map for the modernisation of the state. Some Christian missionary ladies like Miss Butler, Miss Fitz, Miss Mallinson, and Irene Patrie sought woman should get a kind of relief.²⁸ They explored their missionaries and suggested several ways to improve the lot of the woman in Kashmir. A Zenana missionary once asked a Kashmiri woman, "O Dear Kashmiri woman, why won't you wash?" the Kashmiri woman looked with surprise and replied, "We have been so oppressed that we don't care to be clean,"²⁹ That is why Kashmiri woman wear filthy dresses.³⁰ Woman due to their ignorance remained superstitious in nature and were more under the influence and power of priests than their own men.³¹ Despite the enormous efforts of the Christian missionaries, they met with meager success because the general masses as they considered it not only impure to impart western education to boys, but it was also impure to pollute virgin girls' minds with impure ideas from other lands.³² There were whispers and murmurs in the streets, homes, and shops about the impact of modern education on their religion, and people became very wary of being proselytised to Christianity. After years of struggle, Christian missionaries were eventually successful in establishing a school in the city of Srinagar. In 1890, the first girls' school was established, but it was closed due to society's indifferent attitude.³³ Christian missionaries were aware of Kashmir's social ills and

²⁷ Bazaz, *Daughters of Vitasta*, pp. 213-14.

²⁸ Ashley Carus-Wilson, *Irene Patrie: A Missionary to Kashmir*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903), pp. 124-125.

²⁹ Carus-Wilson, *Irene Patrie: A Missionary to Kashmir*, p. 111.

³⁰ Brinckman, *The Wrong of Cashmere*, p.33.

³¹ C. E. Tyndale Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, (London: Seeley, Service & Co. Ltd, 1922), p. 258.

³² M. Ishaq Khan, *History of Srinagar, 1846-1947: A Study in Socio-Cultural Change* (Srinagar: Aamir Publications, 1978), p. 151.

³³ Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, p. 258.



launched attacks on those evils of society. Doctor Kathleen Vangham, a missionary lady, brought this matter to the attention of the League of Nations, and the Maharaja was ordered by the British government to close the valley's prostitution centers.³⁴

Though their motive seems to be to proselytise Kashmiri people towards Christianity as they appear to have thought that it would become an important center of Christianity and would disseminate Christian thoughts in the surrounding areas.³⁵ So, to win over the converts, they highlighted various fallibilities of the existing society, just like lack of education, early marriage, widow remarriage, etc. Missionaries' activities improved people's quality of life. They highlighted the need to provide modern education to the people. They made strenuous efforts to educate teenage girls, despite strong opposition not only from superstitious and orthodox Hindu and Muslim elders but also from the Dogra Government, who were suspicious of the Europeans' intentions and unwilling to allow the Europeans to move throughout the valley. The Fateh Kadal School at Srinagar was raised to the middle standard in 1918 with a government grant of 700 rupees, but progress was dismally slow. There was not a single girl who completed matriculation in these educational institutions, and only a few girls passed their middle standard examination. The primary reason why girls could not complete their education was because of early marriage.³⁶ Nevertheless, under Miss Mallinson (1922-1961), Christian missionary school experienced significant changes as she brought about a great deal of educational and cultural advancement during her tenure.

The Missionary activism activated other stakeholders to take stock of the grim situation. The increasing influence of Christian missionaries and their print culture propaganda proved instrumental in attracting Arya Samaj reformers towards Kashmir. In mainland India, Arya Samaj, found by Dayaram Sarasvati in 1875, found a massive growth. The Arya Samaj was the earliest organisation to start a socio-religious reform movement in the state. The Arya Samajists largely came from Punjab as state officials or those who had established in Srinagar for commercial purposes.³⁷ Local Kashmiri Pandits and priests first opposed it, but with time, they began to support the Samaj's social activities.

³⁴ Mufti, *Chilman se Chaman*, p. 28.

³⁵ Robert Clark, *The Missions of the C.M.S & C.E.Z.M.S. in the Punjab and Sindh*, (London: C.M.S Salisbury Square, 1904), p. 167.

³⁶ Bazaz, *Daughters of Vitasta*, p. 221.

³⁷ Khan, *History of Srinagar*, p. 114.



They tried hard to remove the restrictions placed on Kashmiri Pandit woman, which were chastised by the religious establishment. They are aiming to raise the marriage age restriction, emphasising the negative consequences of child marriage, and were in favour of widow remarriage.³⁸ The organisation endorsed woman's education, widow remarriage and were against the high expenditure on marriages and the dowry system. But it remained confined mainly to non-Muslims.³⁹ However, it should be remembered that Arya Samaj did much to improve the social position of Kashmiri Pandit Woman.⁴⁰

The ever-increasing Christian Missionary activism, followed by Arya Samaj like the Hindu Missionary organisation; the Muslims in the valley began to receive the impulse of the heat of the hour. Until then, woman in Muslim families was in great suffering. The strict patriarchal norms, man's illiteracy, and less knowledge of woman rights in Islam had put Muslim woman in a disadvantageous position. The mass poverty, illiterate society, joint family system, and other such factors deprived woman of a noble living. The Muslim community has remained retrograde; this situation has been exacerbated by *Mullahs* who, to tighten their grip on the local Muslim population, have begun to speak negatively about modern education and its influence on young ladies.⁴¹ The Muslim communities of the valley are generally patriarchal in character, and woman's liberation was against the norm for them. As a result, emancipation was prolonged for a very long time. They saw woman's liberation as an insurrection, but the changes experienced by the Pandit society had an impact on Muslims as well. The beginning of the twentieth century also brought Muslims into the arena of socio-religious reform activities, intending to acquaint the Muslim masses with the cause of their stagnation and, make them aware of the state of backwardness which they have experienced for decades under the rule of autocracies and despotic rule. The earliest and most important organisation founded by Mirwaiz Molvi Rasool Shah was *Anjuman Nusratul Islam*,⁴² among the Muslim community of the state, it was one of the most prominent and leading figures in Kashmir's socio-

³⁸ Census, 1911, Part I, pp. 148, 211.

³⁹ G. H. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir 1931-1940*, (New Delhi: Light & Life Publishers, 1980), pp. 52-53.

⁴⁰ Census, 1911, Part I, p. 148; Census, 1931, Part I, pp. 295-97.

⁴¹ Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, pp. 251, 409.

⁴² Molvi Mohd Shad Mufti, *Tareekh-e-Kashmir Urdu Maharaja Pratap Singh*, (Kashmir Research Institute: 1981), p. 625.



religious reform movement. The association was in favour of Muslim modernisation and believed that the main reason Muslims were backward was a lack of education.⁴³ Mirwaiz established a primary school in Srinagar, originally a *Maktab*, which developed into Islamia High school in 1905. They persuaded the Muslims to take education. Kashmiri Muslim leaders' vision for the community during this period resembles the European Enlightenment ideal of progress through moral uplift.⁴⁴ To reform society, Kashmiri Muslims needed to be made aware of their shortcomings and to be exposed to the benefits of modern education, an essential component of a truly Islamic unified society.⁴⁵ Besides this, many other *Anjumans* were founded in Kashmir among Muslims, which were in favour of eradication of social evils prevalent in the society, the spread of religious education among people of Kashmir, to acquaint Muslims with tenets of Islam and change in thinking and outlook of Muslims of Kashmir. No doubt, these organisations were mostly religious bodies, but they had the main objective to educate Muslims both religious and secular education is offered, either through preaching or through schools dedicated to this purpose. The leaders perceived that people had been suffering from various social evils and many disabilities- social, economic, cultural, commercial, and the state of backwardness was due to the lack of education.⁴⁶ The need was to reform the community so that they were brought to the level of modernism.

Besides, a non-official organisation called the *Women's Welfare Trust* was created in 1926 to improve the material and mental state of Kashmiri woman.⁴⁷ This organisation devised several plans, the most important one was the education of girls and adults.⁴⁸ The schools run by this trust were given aid by the maharaja and education in them was imparted free.⁴⁹ Additionally, the Women's League was established with the mission of holding debates and discussions on social evils in society, ill-advised customs, patriotic woman's role in the reform movement, and ways to achieve overall development. The reform organisations were successful in enacting the Widow Remarriage Act in

⁴³ Ibid, 626.

⁴⁴ Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging*, p. 184-185.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 185

⁴⁶ Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir*, p. 62.

⁴⁷ Bazaz, *Daughters of Vitasta*, 222; see also, Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, p. 295; see also, Annual Administrative Report of Jammu and Kashmir State, 1931.

⁴⁸ Bazaz, *Daughters of Vitasta*, p. 225.

⁴⁹ Tribune, 9-Dec-1932.



1933. The reform activities were mostly prevalent among the Hindu community of Kashmir. These reform activities led to the flourishing of the Hindu community as they made significant gains in education and gained some political influence in the government by obtaining lower-level employment. On the other side. While comparing Muslim girls to Pandit girls, the latter seems to have more access to Modern education since their male counterparts have assured them that modern education would be appreciated enthusiastically, and they are anxious to make them equal partners.⁵⁰ The Pandit community's acceptance of contemporary education appears to be due to their prior access to modern education.

Towards the late 1930s, the genesis of political awakening of Kashmir started. The event of 1931 was Kashmir's first mass rebellion against the Dogras. It led to significant social, economic, and political advances that assisted woman's liberation significantly. Muslim woman in Srinagar did not lag and took the lead in the fight for Kashmir's independence.⁵¹ They never missed any public gatherings and processions,⁵² which took place mostly at Khanqah-e Moula and Hazratbal, which were hotbeds of popular mobilisation and political rallies at the time. People realised the importance of woman education for the social and cultural renaissance. In the meantime, the Government's policy towards girls' education had not remained unaffected. In response to the above problem, the Glancy Commission report recommended establishing more girls' schools in the state.⁵³ A number of new primary and middle schools for girls were opened in the state, and the first girls' high school was opened in Srinagar.⁵⁴ The Maharaja provided financial assistance to private institutions that provided education to girls. A sum of Rs 15,550 was sanctioned in the budget for grant in aid to private girls' schools, and a sum of Rs 22,798 was sanctioned for scholarships.⁵⁵ The creation of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (AJKMC) opened a new chapter in Kashmir's modernisation efforts. The transformation of AJKMC in All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference (AJKNC) and its

⁵⁰ Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, p. 296.

⁵¹ Bazaz, *Daughters of Vitasta*, pp. 245-46; see also, Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, p. 128.

⁵² Mohd Shah, *Tareekh-e-Kashmir Urdu Maharaja Pratap Singh*, p. 723.

⁵³ Glancy Commission Report, 1931, pp. 20-21.

⁵⁴ Annual Administrative Report of Education Department of Jammu and Kashmir State, 1935-36.

⁵⁵ Annual Administrative Report of the Education Department of Jammu and Kashmir State, 1936-37.



socialistic influences resulted in the New Kashmir Manifesto (*Naya Kashmir manifesto*).⁵⁶A Soviet-style manifesto that has become arguably the most important political document in modern Kashmir's history. According to the document, woman would be given equal rights after the end of the Dogra rule.⁵⁷This secular nationalist Kashmiri political party with a left-leaning came to power in 1947.

The *Kashmir Chod Do* or Quit Kashmir campaign was the valley's most coordinated political mobilisation, bolstering Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah's political dominance. A considerable change was witnessed among Kashmiri woman at this phase as a result of their appearance in public meetings and processions, which were held against the Dogra rule.⁵⁸Since woman's empowerment was a major theme in the Naya Kashmir manifesto, which bolstered Kashmiri woman's belief that their situation would change dramatically under the popular government.⁵⁹This can be cited as a factor that prompted them to leave their homes Woman from all walks of life stepped up to support and fight with their male counterparts, assisting in the concealing of nationalist leaders and participating in marches against the Dogra regime's abuses and misrule. Many women removed their veils as a symbolic act; for others, it was a way of stating their resistance to patriarchy; and for others, it was a way of expressing their modernity. During the Dogra rule, under which the Muslim populace appears to have suffered the most, but as political consciousness expanded, new chances and possibilities arose for them.⁶⁰Even though the national conference is well-versed in Kashmiri cultural norms, it made no move to disrupt society's patriarchal system. The probable reasons attributed to this may be that they do not want to raise contradictions within the society Nonetheless, their efforts yielded the outcomes that we see in later times.

After the partition of the Indian sub-continent into India and Pakistan, there was widespread bloodshed, disturbance and holocausts, and in the meanwhile, Kashmir faced tribal invasion towards

⁵⁶ Muslim conference later on renamed as the national conference. it was done to broaden the base of organisation, as some non-Muslims labeled this organisation is devoted to the Muslim interests only as the name of the organisation started with the "Muslim" So the leadership of the time find it plausible to change the name of organisation as the National conference; see also, Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, pp. 263-64.

⁵⁷ *Naya Kashmir*, Part 5, Women's Charter, pp. 71-77.

⁵⁸ Madhvi Yasin, Role of Women in the Freedom Struggle of Kashmir, in ed. M. Yasin & A.Q. Rafiqi, *History of Freedom Struggle in Jammu and Kashmir*, (New Delhi: Light & Life Publishers, 1980), p. 202.

⁵⁹ *Naya Kashmir*, Part 5, Women's Charter, pp. 71-77.

⁶⁰ Shamlu Mufti, *Meyean Kath: A Kashmiri Woman's Struggle for Empowerment (1925-2008)*, translated from Kashmiri by Shafi Shauq, (Srinagar: K P H Publisher, 2021), p. 45.



the closing months of 1947. The Maharaja fled from Kashmir to Jammu and left the valley and also administration undefended. The Emergency Administration of National Conference headed by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah got help from the Indian Government to ward off outsiders. A volunteer corps of young men were recruited to assist the Indian Army in fighting the invaders, a woman's squad was also recruited for the same purpose.⁶¹ It was a *Women's Self-Defence Corpse* that was intended to provide an opportunity to defend themselves and their homeland.⁶² It was the harbinger of social change, as Kashmiri woman for the first time got an opportunity to wield weapons, and their social activism created spheres of emancipation for Kashmiri woman.⁶³ In such a conservative society where woman had limited public exposure, establishing volunteer forces was a groundbreaking innovation.⁶⁴ Begum Akbar Jehan, Miss Mehmooda Ali Shah, Sajda Zameer, and Krishna Misri, mostly upper strata of the society, were its key figures. They attempted to instil a nationalist awareness and feeling of self in people. Nyla Ali Khan asserted that Kashmiri woman are capable of exercising authority and influence even in a conservative environment. She emphasises how Akbar Jehan opened the ground for woman's liberation by stepping out of gender boundaries and providing a public place for them. She goes on to say that women from various socioeconomic categories were galvanised to take advantage of educational opportunities, improve professional skills, and modify existing organisations to accommodate more woman.⁶⁵ But Prem Nath Bazaz has mentioned that this woman's squad, which was recruited to assist Indian military forces against invaders, was composed only of 40 girls (mostly Pandits of Srinagar city), was an emergency measure that was disbanded after the ward-off of tribal invasion. This experiment was not allowed to succeed and did not last long.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Bazaz, *Daughters of Vitasta*, p. 265, see also, Rasheed Taseer, *Tehreek-i-Hurriyat*, (Srinagar: Malfuz Publications, 1984), p. 285.

⁶² Women's self-defence corpse was voluntarily organisation initiated by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. Several voluntaries became members of this organisation they were given the training to safeguard themselves and their homeland from the tribal invaders. Further reading see also. Krishna Misri, Kashmiri women down the ages: A gendered Perspective in, *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* Vol.6 Nos.3-4, July-Dec. 2002.

⁶³ Nyla Ali Khan, *The Life of a Kashmiri Woman: Dialectic of Resistance and Accommodation*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 39.

⁶⁴ Andrew Whitehead, "The People's Militia: Communists and Kashmiri nationalism in the 1940s", *Twentieth Century Communism: in. journal of International History*, Vol. 2, (2010), p. 149.

⁶⁵ Nyla Ali Khan, *Islam, Women, and Violence in Kashmir: Between India and Pakistan*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 134-135.

⁶⁶ Bazaz, *Daughters of Vitasta*, p. 265, see also, Taseer, *Tehreek-i-Hurriyat*, pp. 240-41.



After 1947, the New Kashmir manifesto (*Naya Kashmir*) functioned as a road map to a large extent. Several initiatives have been taken. A number of measures aimed at the welfare of girls and woman's education are taking form. As nowhere else in India or Pakistan education was provided free from primary to university level.⁶⁷ A women's college was founded in Srinagar in 1950, followed by another in 1961, which opened new vistas for the woman of Kashmir. But the political tensions and situations which arose in Kashmir valley, Policies of the post-1947 Kashmiri government provided ample opportunities, of which the beneficiaries were mostly the influential group of Kashmiri woman.⁶⁸ Benefits did not flow equally to all but remained confined to a few. While the ordinary people felt the brunt of income inequality and social segregation. The standard of living improved among a few sections of the society of Kashmir.⁶⁹ Rural Kashmiris, which form the bulk of the population, generally remained entangled in large scale poverty and did not get benefitted equally from Kashmir's modernisation. No doubt, the new state louds equality for woman, but in practice majority of woman felt the burden of the state's failure.

The post-independence era also saw the emergence of socio-religious reform movements like *Ahl-i-Hadith* and *Jamaat-i-Islami*, which augment and support government attempts to address social, economic, and political inequities. Sayyed Hussain Shah Batku, a Kashmiri student of an *Ahl-i-Hadith* madrasa in Delhi, founded the *Ahl-i-Hadith* movement in Kashmir in the late 19th century and began a war against unlawful practices that had grown in Kashmir.⁷⁰ No doubt did not emerge as a mass movement but was succeeded to win a limited support among sections of the Muslim urban elite. The *Ahl-i-Hadith* leaders were trying to create consciousness among Muslims and advocated the political unity of Muslims of Kashmir. They argued that the decadence of the Kashmiri Muslims in political and religious fields was mainly due to the supremacy of the Mullahs. It is due to the ignorance of the people that some new unislamic customs had crept into the Muslim society. They generated a new sense of awareness among Kashmiri Muslims, who regarded the *mullahs* as their

⁶⁷ The Times of India, 15-Sep-1958; see also, Prem Nath Bazaz, *Kashmir in Crucible*, (New Delhi: Pamposh Publications, 1967), p. 46.

⁶⁸ Hafsa Kanjwal, The New Kashmiri Woman: State-Led Feminism in Naya Kashmir, *Economic & Political Weekly* 53, no. 47 (2018): p. 36.

⁶⁹ Hussain, *Kashmir in the Aftermath of Partition*, p. 150.

⁷⁰ Khan, *History of Srinagar*, p. 107.



true masters, by emphasising the concept of *tauhid*.⁷¹ There took place great change in the outlook of many people who no longer depended upon their *Mullahs*. It gave a new direction to their religious thought, and the influence of *Mullahs* on the lives of people began to decline considerably. The *Ahl-i-Hadith* movement played an important role in the development of Urdu and the Kashmiri language in the valley.⁷² It also established schools for both boys and girls where education was imparted strictly on Islamic lines. The newspaper published by *Ahl-i-Hadith* 'Muslim' dealt mostly with religious matters, but it also addressed social and political issues, such as the cause of women's education.⁷³ *Jamaat-i-Islami*, an Islamic organisation based on the ideology of Sayyed Abul A'la Maududi, emerged in Kashmir as an independent body with its own constitution. It had no pre-existing social or political base in the valley, yet it grew in popularity among Kashmiri Muslims because of the deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and lack of democratic accountability in the region.⁷⁴ The *Jamat-i-Islami* was one of the most prominent and influential religious organisation in Kashmir; they believed that the Islamic State was the only answer to Kashmir's socio-economic difficulties, and they established a network of schools to generate a mass base. This organisation blamed *Mullahs* for the marginalisation and impotence of Kashmiri Muslims and saw rituals associated with Sufi-based Islam as un-Islamic.⁷⁵ They argued that a political system governed by Islamic rules would ensure an equitable system of distribution, accountability, elimination of immorality, and the reconstruction of society.⁷⁶ They saw social reformation as necessary and planned to overhaul the state's educational system in order to liberate the next generation of Kashmiris from superstition, obscurantism, and other problems. According to the organisation, the new secular form of education was a meticulously orchestrated scheme to encourage immorality and vice among the youth.⁷⁷ They established primary, middle and high schools, where both modern disciplines, as well as Islamic subjects, were taught to

⁷¹ Bashir Ahmad Khan, *Ahl-I-Hadith Movement in Kashmir 1901-1981*, Unpublished M.Phil. Thesis, (February, 1984), p. 97.

⁷² Ibid, p. 107.

⁷³ Khan, *History of Srinagar*, p.185.

⁷⁴ Hussain, *Kashmir in the Aftermath of Partition*, p.156.

⁷⁵ Yoginder Sikand, *Popular Kashmiri Sufism and the Challenges of Scriptural Islam (1900- 1989)*, in ed. Aparna Rao, *The Valley of Kashmir: The Making and Unmaking of Composite Culture?*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2008), 508; See also, Shahla Hussain, *Kashmir in the Aftermath of Partition*, p. 156.

⁷⁶ Azan, 25-Sep-1973.

⁷⁷ Hussain, *Kashmir in the Aftermath of Partition*, p. 156.



the students so that they could make a seamless transition of professional colleges and occupy different branches of administration. By 1974, the party sponsored 120 schools with a total of 13000 students, including 4000 girls.⁷⁸The official organ of *Jama'at-i-islami*, *Azan*, played an essential role in the expansion of Islam in the region. Certainly, the organisation has been instrumental in the emancipation of Kashmiri Muslims, and they have made strenuous efforts to educate Kashmiri woman. They played the role of protector of the unprivileged and addressed themselves as crusaders against social evils, injustices and illiteracy. These two movements democratised education and Urdu literature so that people could comprehend it easily and check the orthodoxy and clergy supremacy, which boosted woman education. Such things, with some own limitations, rejuvenated the position of woman.

Conclusion

The people of Kashmir suffered greatly in the following centuries and also did not regain much under Dogras. The people of Kashmir were treated as if they were dumb-driven castles, denied education and other basic amenities, and the state's only concern was revenue collecting. Many missionaries felt worried about their predicament and pushed for their improvement, prompting the Dogra authorities to undertake some adjustments. The first wave of modernity in Kashmir was spurred by the arrival of missionaries. As a consequence, missionaries raised awareness of Kashmiri woman's situation, and people's views about woman shifted. Their efforts were essential in changing people's minds about woman's emancipation. Following that, the government-backed it up half-heartedly. The Kashmiri embryonic nationalism movement has also campaigned for the betterment of various elements of society, particularly woman. The introduction of Naya Kashmir has sparked a new zeal among Kashmir's woman, as seen by the number of women who have left their homes to participate actively in politics. This modernisation process was mostly male-dominated, striving for reform and development in woman's positions without undermining the wider patriarchal framework. Woman's emancipation in Kashmir was largely assisted by social reform organisations. They promoted awareness of a range of social concerns, and their encouragement of valley people to

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 157.



pursue contemporary education has benefitted the Muslim community significantly. Unfortunately, the Naya Kashmir goal was put on hold by the political turbulence that ensued in 1947. Despite that, many parents were unable to enrol their girls in school due to backwardness, prejudices, poverty, and a faulty sense of morality.