

## **Dogra State, Colonial Intervention and a Fractured Modernity in Jammu and Kashmir (1846-1931)**

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### **Abstract:**

The ascendance of the Dogra dynasty on the political horizon of the newly founded Princely state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1846, under the tutelage of British East India Company, saw the climax of the feudal atrocity in the state and more particularly in the Valley of Kashmir. The British intervention guided by her own colonial compulsions, beginning at the end of the nineteenth century, only generated a fractured modernity; where on the one hand modern communications, bureaucratized administration, modern education and health services and modern industry were introduced in the state, but on the other hand in the absence of a state with a progressive outlook, the forces of modernity only worsened the conditions of the people. The paradox thus necessitated a democratic movement of the newly emerged middle class [a product of 'reformative' project in itself] to negotiate between the modernity and the feudal/colonial political setup. This paper is an attempt to understand the nature of colonial modernity project in Jammu and Kashmir which began at the end of nineteenth century.

**Keywords:** Jammu and Kashmir, Dogra State, governance, modernity, colonial intervention

### **Introduction: Birth of the state**

The state of Jammu and Kashmir owes its origin to the Treaty of Amritsar (16<sup>th</sup> of August 1846) concluded between the British East India Company and the Gulab Singh, a Jammu based Dogra chieftain of the Sikh kingdom of Punjab. The Treaty was in itself a byproduct of the Treaty of Lahore (9<sup>th</sup> August 1846), concluded to end the first Anglo-Sikh war which left the Sikh state founded by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, only shadow of its original one. The Dogras chieftains have emerged as rulers of Jammu province in the declining years of the Imperial Mughals, but as feudatories of the Sikh kingdom. In 1834 Gulab Singh conquered hilly terrains of Ladakh followed by the conquest of Baltistan in 1840. The British East India Company coveted the prosperous and strategically important Punjab after the death of Ranjit Singh. When hostilities broke out, Gulab Singh, one of the highly influential satraps of the Sikh state, betrayed his masters and allied himself secretly with the British whom he rightly anticipated as the future masters of the Indian subcontinent.

The Treaty of Lahore made the Sikh State a British tributary and imposed on it a heavy indemnity of rupees one and half crores which Governor-General, Hardinge, was clearly aware that the Sikhs would be unable to pay.<sup>1</sup> Since it could not pay, it ceded the territories between Beas and Indus rivers including Kashmir and Hazara. The Article XII of the Treaty was inserted to prepare ground for the

Treaty of Amritsar and to describe Gulab Singh's betrayal to his masters with exquisite delicacy: "In consideration of the services rendered by Raja Golab Singh of Jummoo to the Lahore State, towards procuring the restoration of the relations of amity between the Lahore and British Governments, the Maharaja hereby agrees to recognize the Independent Sovereignty of Raja Golab Singh, in such territories and districts in the hills as may be made over to the said Raja Golab Singh by separate agreement between himself and the British Government..." That separate agreement was the Treaty of Amritsar through which transferred the territories ceded from the Sikh state to the Gulab Singh for rupees 75 lakhs nanak shahi with British retaining Kalu and Manali areas of the present Himachal Pradesh. Thus, came into existence the state of Jammu and Kashmir formed through inheritance, conquest, purchase and the British blessings. Later, some other small but distinct political entities were added to the State. The most significant was the Gilgat Agency, which the British attached to the State for political convenience in 1889, and which the Dogras leased back to them in 1935. Also Poonch came under the formal control of the State in 1936. Thus a group of otherwise unrelated tracts were connected to form one of the largest princely states, which had nothing in common except a ruler imposed on it, purely for political considerations. In the words of the Australian legal expert Sir Owen Dixon, who lead a UN mission to mediate between India and Pakistan on Kashmir: "the state of Jammu and Kashmir is not really a unit geographically, demographically or economically, it is an agglomeration of territories brought under the political power of one Maharaja [Gulab Singh]. That is the unity it possesses."<sup>2</sup>

### **Impact of the Treaty**

The imposition of the Dogra dynasty of Jammu on the people of Kashmir Valley, with predominant Muslim population, through the colonial project, was negatively unique phenomena for them mainly for three reasons. Firstly, although, the people of the Valley had been continuously ruled, since the Mughal occupation in 1586, by the dynasts who had their centers of power outside the Kashmir, however, Kashmiris (at least some sections) were always involved, in one way or the other, in the process of change, either by way of sending invitations or serving as local collaborators to the occupying forces. But in the case of the Gulab Singh, all new arrangements were made without their knowledge and least with their consent.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, Dogra dynasty, with its base at Jammu, was unlike its Mughal, Afghan and Sikh predecessors, ruling from a culturally lesser known region than the Valley, with a very rich cultural past and civilizational background. It may be for this reason that Dogras consciously imposed on Kashmiris the inhuman practices (like, begar, organized prostitution and unarmed them to reduce their marshal sprit) to dehumanize them and to reduce their cultural level.

Thirdly, unlike their predecessors, Dogras were not sovereigns in the strict sense of the term; rather they were vassals of another mightier power- British East India Company- as is clear from the Article X of the Treaty of Amritsar. Thus, as a consequence of this dual over lordship, the Valley people were supposed to show their allegiance to two masters- the Dogras and the British. It was double imperialism.

### **How People Responded to the Treaty?**

Kashmiris were lacking both, the leadership as well as the means to resist the imposition of the Treaty, but they were not lacking the desire to challenge its unilateral imposition. Thus, when last Sikh Governor to Kashmir, Sheikh Immamudin refused to submit, Kashmiris threw their lot behind him which sustained his revolt against the combined Dogra, British and Sikh forces for months together. Captain Arthur Broome, who was deputed to oversee the transfer of power to Gulab Singh, confirmed Sheikh Immamudin's impressively strong base of support in Kashmir and suggested that he had "the chief power in the country and the popular feeling....[was] with him."<sup>4</sup> Thus Immamudin, with popular support to his side and rich resources of the Valley at his disposal, managed to inflict a defeat to the Dogra army and Gulab Singh's representative, Lakpat Rai was killed in the fight. It was only when British troops along with Sikh forces marched to the Valley that a reluctant Immamudin surrendered and Gulab Singh was installed as the new ruler. It may not look surprising then that a century later, in 1946, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah (1905-82) proudly recalled Immamudin's revolt in the court where he was tried for sedition charges for launching the Quiet Kashmir movement in 1946, challenging the very basis of the Treaty and, hence, the moral right of the Dogras to rule over Kashmir.

### **How the Masters Behaved**

Taking advantage of the unbridled powers, granted by the Treaty of Amritsar and governing norms of the princely India at the time, the Dogra rulers considered Kashmir as their purchased property<sup>5</sup> and ruled the subject population as a master rules over his slaves.<sup>6</sup> High principles of governance were unknown to them and the state they created remained, by all standards, person centered and feudal in character. They always discriminated the province of Kashmir in particular, considering it a purchased land and relatively preferred Jammu province, their home land.<sup>7</sup> Even within the Valley itself, more discriminatory policy was perpetuated against the majority Muslim community of Kashmir, a fact which is attested by almost all the contemporary sources.<sup>8</sup> P L Lakhanpal summarized the communal stance of Dogra rulers by saying, "the sale-deed of 1846 put a largely populated Muslim state under the Dogra rule which had been characterized as despotic, tyrannical and sectarian".<sup>9</sup>

The state deliberately propagated the policy of racial discrimination against the Muslims in particular and other non-Dogra communities in general. Gawasha Lal Koul, though being very well disposed towards the rulers, remarks: "Maharaja Pratab Singh [1885-1925] would say, 'don't give too much to Rajputs, use Kashmiri Pundits as much as you can and see that Muslims do not starve'."<sup>10</sup> The said maharaja was relatively moderate compared to his predecessors.

Muslim subjects who constituted around 80% of the total population of the state had only a nominal share in the government services.<sup>11</sup> The Riots Enquiry Committee, which was constituted after July 1931 disturbances in the State by Maharaja Hari Singh [1925-1952] to look in to the grievances of the aggrieved muslim community, found in its report, the share of Muslims in the state services not more than fifteen percent.<sup>12</sup> The situation would appear more appalling given that the Muslims were kept away from the important and influential positions in government services.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the economic policies adopted by the state ruined the producing communities without any exception. The revenue department which remained throughout monopolized by the non-muslim officialdom, and which had most of its dealings with Muslim masses, was the most corrupt and oppressive branch of the autocratic state apparatus.<sup>14</sup> The taxation policy was regressive which left the working classes half-fed and

starving.<sup>15</sup>European travelers who thronged to the valley in huge numbers during the period, and British officials who had served to the Dogra state, had left behind interesting information regarding the material life of the people and the state policies. Lieutenant Colonel Torrens, while comparing the Dogras with the early foreign rulers of Kashmir underlines the Dogra tyranny when he wrote: “[T]his last state (Dogra State) was worse than the first for Gulab Singh went beyond his predecessors in the gently acts of undue taxation and extortion. They had taxed heavily, it is true, but he sucked the very life blood of the people. They had laid violent hands on a large proportion of the fruits of the earth, the profits of loom and the work of men’s hands, but he skinned the very flints to fill his coffers”.<sup>16</sup>Almost all types of produce and all classes attached with production processes were brought under heavy taxation regime as had been stated by Sir Francis in the following words: “On the manufacture of shawls, parallel restrictions were placed. Wool was taxed as it entered Kashmir; the manufacturer was taxed for every workman he employed, and also at various stages of the process according to the value of fabric: Lastly there was the enormous duty of 85% ad valorem. Butchers, bakers, carpenters, boatmen and even prostitutes were taxed. Poor coolies, who were engaged to carry load for travelers, had to give up half their earnings”.<sup>17</sup>The revenue officials were highly corrupt who not only mal-treated the masses but also fattened themselves on illegal exactions known as nazrana andrasum extracted from helpless peasantry.<sup>18</sup>These officials resorted to extreme kind of inhuman torturous methods to extract as much as they could from unwilling peasants:

“At the time of collecting the land revenue, the use of nettle scourge in summer and of plunging recurrent tax payer into cold water in winter was popular methods of torture carried out against the peasants. Through, these corrupt practices and oppressive methods of the revenue department, the Muslim cultivators suffered unspeakable injustice and oppression.”<sup>19</sup>

No wonder that the mere sight of an official’s visit to any village caused all hell to fall upon its helpless dwellers.<sup>20</sup>The famous revenue expert, Sir Walter Lawrence, has mentioned: “The official visit, which to us officials seems so pleasant to all concerned, sends the pulse of the village up many degrees, and those are happy who dwell far away from the beaten tracks.... He has good reasons to hate and distrust them”.<sup>21</sup>As a consequence, Lawrence reasoned out, “the rich land was left uncultivated and the army was employed in forcing the villagers to plough and sow, and worse still, the soldiers came at the harvest time and when the share of the state had been seized and these men of war had helped themselves, there was very little given to the unfortunate peasants to tide over the cruel winter when the snow lies deep and temperature falls below zero”.<sup>22</sup>He recorded that when he started settlement of the land, everything save air and water was under taxation. Even the office of the gravedigger was taxed.<sup>23</sup>

It is thus, not surprising that the vitality of the people had been extremely undermined and the state witnessed successive famines, epidemics and choleras in 1877-9, 1888, 1892, 1900-1902, 1906-1907 and 1910, and an outbreak of plague in 1903-1904 AD, which substantially decimated the peasant population of the state. The famine of 1877-9 was most destructive. For the death toll from the famine had been overwhelming by any standards. Some authorities had suggested that the population of Srinagar had been reduced by half (from 127, 400 to 60,000), while others had estimated a diminution by three fifths of the population of the entire valley.<sup>24</sup>The famine had also brought to light the inadequacy of the protection offered to Kashmiri cultivators by the agrarian arrangements of the Dogra

State. Interestingly, according to reports received by Lawrence during his field surveys, not a single Pundit died of starvation during these annihilative years for the Muslim cultivator. Yet, more surprisingly, Wazir Punnu, Pundit Prime Minister during these famine years is said to have declared that there 'was not real distress and that he wished that no Musalman might be left alive from Srinagar to Ramban (in Jammu); It justified incidents of extreme cruelty towards Muslim cultivators, including the humiliation of stripping them naked for their failure to pay revenue.'<sup>25</sup>

The worst was still to come in the form of Begar[forced labor without or with meager compensation].<sup>26</sup> In theory, though, Begar had been abolished in 1893, but in practice it persisted, particularly in remoter districts, right up to 1947 in one way or the other. The continuance of Begar and the suffering caused by it to the distressed masses is substantiated even by the Glancy Commission Report of 1932. "Complaints have been received that not unoften the government officials disobey the orders of his Highness and force the villagers to carry the loads of the officials to far-off places without any remuneration. As a matter of fact they exact other kinds of unpaid services from them".<sup>27</sup> The economic suppression deteriorated the Kashmiri masses both physically as well as intellectually and the cultural level of the valley had gone down considerably.<sup>28</sup>

The state not only discriminated the Kashmiri masses on economic front but what proved more crucial was that it also interfered with their religious affairs. Regarding the communal nature of the state, Prem Nath Bazaz had mentioned: "Speaking generally and from the bourgeois point of view, the Dogra rule has been a HinduRaj. 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."<sup>29</sup>

Until 1934, for example, the slaughter of cow was a capital offence; and it continued to be forbidden under larger penalty after that date.<sup>30</sup> Hindus, alone, were allowed licenses to possess firearms in the Valley of Kashmir; and the Muslims from the vale were carefully excluded from service in the state's armed forces where the higher ranks were reserved for Dogra Rajputs. Muslim troops in the Jammu and Kashmir state forces were mainly recruited from the Sudhans of Poonch, a military clan which the Maharaja believed could be relied upon to suppress any 'disorder' in the valley.<sup>31</sup> State promulgated a law according to which if any Muslim would embrace Hinduism he was allowed to inherit property and enjoy guardianship over his children, whereas when any Hindu became a Muslim, he was deprived of all such rights.<sup>32</sup> Muslim masses were subjected to pay Marriage tax, zarri-i-nikah, on every marriage that took place in their families.<sup>33</sup>

Dogra's didn't even hesitate to interfere in the administration of Muslim shrines and institutions. Many Mosques and shrines were confiscated by the state and some of them were even converted into granaries and ammunition store houses. Thus we see the restoration of the confiscated religious places formed an important demand of the Muslim leaders in the Memorandum to Viceroy in 1924, which they submitted to Lord Reading, Governor General of India during his visit to the valley in 1924.<sup>34</sup>

### **The Intervention of the Overlord**

It was only after British intervention in 1880's that the concept of 'reformation' was introduced in the state apparatus. On February 25, 1880, the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, wrote to the Secretary of State Lord

Cranbrook: “I consider that time has come when we must decisively intervene for the rescue of a perishing population, on whose behalf we certainly contracted moral obligations and responsibilities when we handed them over to the uncontrolled rule of a power alien to them in race and creed, and representing no civilization higher than theirs”.<sup>35</sup> Cranbrook conceded “that [while] we are not directly responsible but we have relations with Cashmere which would justify strong interference with their enormities and the use of a tone which ought to have its effect... We ought to have influence to have prevent the annihilation of a race whose only crime is different religion from that of the powers in authority...”.<sup>36</sup> Maharaja Pratap Singh [1885-1925] was allowed to succeed to his father, Maharaja Ranbir Singh [1856-1885], on strictly defined conditions of internal overhauling of his administrative apparatus. However, there were other factors as well which compelled British government in India to intervene in the affairs of some Princely States. The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw questioning to the legitimacy of colonial rule in the face of a growing onslaught from popular nationalist sentiments in British India which culminated in the formation of Indian National Congress. A strategy for survival in an age when the ‘national idea’ and popular national movements were increasingly widespread, dynasts aspired to make themselves more ‘representative’ of their subjects.<sup>37</sup> But the difference in the case of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir is that the need for ‘reformation’ for from being voluntarily realized and supervised by its rulers came from the external stimulus of a British paramount power.<sup>38</sup> Probably, there was no such strong ‘national idea’ within. Undoubtedly, the British intervention was more motivated by her own colonial compulsions than by any ‘good’ of the people of Jammu and Kashmir State.

Ian Copland has pointed to demands increasingly made, beginning already in the 1860’s, from a British trading lobby as well as from ‘the evangelical fraternity’, for a change in the post-rebellion colonial state’s decision to preserve India’s princes. They were allegedly speaking in the interest of large numbers of Indians left beyond the pale of benign direct British rule. ‘Was it right’, they questioned, ‘that some of India’s people should prosper while others languished in poverty and ignorance and suffered oppression just because they happened to be subjects of a dependent Prince.’<sup>39</sup> Also In 1877 ‘some unknown Kashmiris’ had submitted a memorandum to the Viceroy. The accusations of maladministration levied in it were of alarming nature the most serious charge made was that ‘in order to save the expanse of feeding his people’ the Maharaja, Ranbir Singh, had preferred to drown boatloads of Muslims in the Wular Lake. The British Government using these allegations as an excuse appointed a commission of enquiry to look in to the allegations. It is no surprising that in a highly regimented state, Kashmiri Muslims had been too frightened to come forward to provide corroborations.<sup>40</sup> Although the Maharaja managed to free himself from the charges, the outrage caused by this advertisement of the shocking condition of the valley’s Muslims called for some measure of intervention of the colonial government. The devastating famine of 1877-9 about which reference has already been made above, also prompted a serious reconsideration of the colonial policy of non-interference in Kashmir. The Kashmir Durbar’s attitude during the famine had demonstrated its unwillingness to rise above the preferential treatment of its Hindu subjects to the detriment of Muslim cultivators who were the greatest sufferers.

However, the final impetus for the installation of Resident in the state came after the Afghan war of 1878, which made control over the north-western boundaries of the British Empire more urgent than ever.<sup>41</sup> In 1884 the Viceroy, Lord Ripon, argued that the appointment of a Resident in Kashmir was

called for both, 'by the need for assisting and supervising administrative reforms' but also to obviate disturbance on the Afghan frontier.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the British were not in any haste to intervene in the state affairs at least during the lifetime of Maharaja Ranbir Singh. Thus, in August 1884, the Foreign Department of the Government of India instructed the Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir that "so long as Maharaja Ranbir Singh is alive, the Government of India do not propose to make any change in their existing policy....(avoiding) anything which is calculated in the maharaja's present state of health unnecessarily to disturb his mind."<sup>43</sup> The death of Ranbir Singh encouraged the British to take advantage of Pratap Singh's resultant political insecurity and to impose its conditions on him for upholding the principle of primogeniture in the succession.<sup>44</sup> The condition was of course one which the new maharaja would be given no opportunity to decline and the reforms indicated included the appointment of the Officer on Special Duty as the new 'Resident' in Kashmir. At the same time, the Government of India impressed on the Maharaja "the necessity for consulting (Resident) at all times, and following ... (his) advice."<sup>45</sup> Hence, Sir Olivier St. John was appointed as the first Resident with enormous powers. The powers of the Residency were further enhanced after Pratap Singh was divested by the British government of his powers to govern on 17 April 1889, after he was allegedly accused of conducting treasonable correspondence with Tsarist Russia and of plotting the assassination of the Resident in Kashmir, as also of his own brothers, the Rajas Ram Singh and Amar Singh. He was forced to abdicate his powers in favour of 'State Council', whose members were to be appointed by the Government of India. However, he was allowed to continue as a titular chief of the state<sup>46</sup> till in 1905 when his position as Maharaja restored with full authority.<sup>47</sup>

The appointment of a Resident in Kashmir was a necessary prelude to the implementation of much awaited and wide ranging reforms in the Dogra State. These include the introduction of a modern and salaried bureaucracy manned by qualified individuals, a system of proper financial control, improvements in the judicial administration, reorganization of the revenue administration, development in the Communication and the introduction of modern education in the state. However, these reforms were not enough to change the feudal nature of the state, but were undoubtedly, sufficient to bring about certain social changes to break the status quo imposed in the state and to allow its people to get more closely connected with British India and its developments. Also the process of modernization in the state remained fractured in operation because of the contradictions it brought with itself and thus, failed to substantially improve the quality of life in the state. This was mainly because the state in itself was not interested in the new process rather it viewed the modernity project as detrimental to its own existence and hence remained an obstruction to the change.

Imperial interests apart, the Government of India was anxious to replace the feudal structure of the state by modern bureaucratic form of administration. With this purpose in view, the British Resident began to interest himself through the State Council in starting to reorganize all the departments dealing with different branches of administration.<sup>48</sup> Accordingly, the system of departmentalization was introduced with a view to bring about an integrated system of administration.<sup>49</sup> But there was a difficulty in making these endeavors effective. Because, according to Bazaz, 'there were few local men with the requisite qualifications available to do the jobs and fewer schools and no colleges into state where the citizens could have been educated for the task.'<sup>50</sup> Thus, people were imported from British India particularly from the Punjab province, mostly Hindus or Englishmen recommended by the British government, to men different branches of the administration. "Armies of outsiders trailed

behind the offices from the plains with no more interest than to draw as much as they could, and then to depart leaving behind their kindred as successors to continue the drain; and thus was established a hierarchy in the services with the result that profits and wealth passed into the hands of the outsiders and the indigenous subjects lost enterprise and independence.”<sup>51</sup> Kashmiri Pundits, who had monopolized the state services, their “favorite occupation”<sup>52</sup> was, needless to say, unhappy with this change, and soon started campaigning to regain their position in Kashmir’s bureaucracy.<sup>53</sup> Strengthening his lines with the most privileged segment among his subjects and promoting their interests was particularly advisable if Pratap Singh to counter the increased powers of the State Council and the Resident, both backed by the imperial government. Thus, in 1897, he criticized the State Council for filling the higher rungs of the state bureaucracy with ‘aliens’ at the expense of the natives of Kashmir (Pundits) and the Dogras.<sup>54</sup> Later on between 1895 and 1912, when his powers were to be restored he issued some orders directing his Government that for the administrative departments “subjects of the State should be given preference.”<sup>55</sup>

### **Overhauling finances and exposing the State**

The Government of India after assuming its control in the state through the Resident was keen to streamline the financial structure of the state, after it was shocked to know in 1885 that ‘the Public treasury [of Jammu and Kashmir was] practically empty’ and more surprisingly to learn that ‘the late Maharaja (had) regularly diverted the revenue of certain districts to his private chest’ and had ‘solemnly enjoined that this money should never be used to meet the current expenditure of the state’.<sup>56</sup> It was in this context that R. Logan, the accountant general of the Bombay Presidency, was sent in 1890-2 to inquire into the Kashmir durbar’s financial affairs. His investigations revealed the massive financial bankruptcy of the state and disclosed that the ‘Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir had egoistically spent on themselves rather than on the state and for the public good of their subjects.’<sup>57</sup> A particular focus of Logan’s investigations had been the funds of Dharamarth Trust’s, a body established to look after temples and Hindu religious affairs. A huge amount of twenty lakhs of rupees in the name of trust was lying unutilized, which could not be appropriated for the general public spending of the state.<sup>58</sup> Logan made his recommendation that Dharamarth Trust fund be included within the Public revenues of the state but placed under the special category of an ‘excluded local fund’ and any unspent balance of the fund’s revenues was to be ‘devoted to Education and Medical heads.’<sup>59</sup>

### **Land ‘Reform’ or Streamlining the Exploitation?**

Of all the measures of reform proposed by the Government of India, none was as thorough going and noticeable as the land settlement operations instituted between 1889 and 1895 and overseen by the celebrated British Civil Servant, Sir Walter Lawrence. The apparent sympathy with which he treated the plight of the cultivating classes of Kashmiri Muslims earned him a degree of respect in evidence to this day in Kashmir. The investigations of Lawrence and A. Wingate, who was appointed before the former to conduct a preliminary survey between 1887 and 1888, was as though a veil had suddenly been lifted and the life of the subject population in the valley revealed as one of unmitigated oppression suffered through the years.

The foremost features of the settlement which Sir Walter officiated were i) the state demand was fixed for fourteen years, ii) payment in cash was substituted for payment in kind, iii) the use of force in the

collection of revenue was done away with iv) beggar (forced Labour) in its more objectionable form was abolished. Occupancy rights were conferred on Zamindars in undisputed lands, vi) the status of privileged holders of land was investigated and land in excess of the sanctioned areas assessed at the ordinary rates vii) waste lands were entered as Khalisa viii) permanent but non-alienable hereditary rights were granted to those who accepted the first assessment, and all land was carefully evaluated on the basis of produce, previous collection and possibility of irrigation. The rasum and other excessive exactions of Jagirdars and big land lords were abolished and the rents and liabilities of the cultivators were defined.<sup>60</sup>

Paradoxically however, with the land settlement carried out by Lawrence the position of privileged holders of land rights became more fully entrenched in the agrarian hierarchy of Kashmir. Lawrence himself had kept the chakdars and mukarraridars in place. In theory they were turned into assamis of the villages in which their estates lay. But while admitting that there was 'nothing in the deeds which entitle[d] them to privileged rates (of assessment)', Lawrence applauded the state's decision to continue the concessionary rates for a further ten years.<sup>61</sup> The ten years limitation was obviously disregarded since the chakdars and mukarraridars continued to enjoy beneficial terms of access to land until as late as 1948 when their grants were finally abolished.<sup>62</sup> Jagir villages were not even included in Lawrence's survey.<sup>63</sup>

The settlement was not even able to get rid of the notorious revenue officials, who would frequently suppress the peasantry. Undoubtedly, the land settlement regarded them as mere assamis who were required to pay their share of revenue. However, Lawrence and later settlement experts still depended on the same revenue officials to carry out the actual settlement, which required elaborate machinery that the colonial state was not willing to spare for Kashmir. Thus precedent, known only to revenue officials, became the basis for settlement policy.<sup>64</sup> Since all land was subject to the settlement, the official's concocted ways to prove their proprietary titles on land; many were even successful in entering themselves into revenue records as proprietors of lands to which they had been specially assigned by the Maharaja in the past few decades, thus contributing to the growing class of urban land holders.<sup>65</sup>

Both revenue experts Wingate and Lawrence had commented on the uniqueness of Kashmir in that 'the Banuya (Hindu Moneylender) of India (was) practically unknown in Kashmir.'<sup>66</sup> Conditions changed, however, in the post-settlement period, with a marked increase in indebtedness. 'This was a direct result of Lawrence converting the payment of at least part of the revenue owed to the state from kind into cash.'<sup>67</sup> This baneful consequence of settlement was even attested by Maharaja Hari Singh (successor of Pratap Singh) when he promulgated the Agriculturist's Relief Act in 1926/27 with a view to 'freeing agriculturalists and protecting them from usurious rates of interest.'<sup>68</sup> Around this time indebtedness effected almost more than 70% of the rural population if one believes the assessment of P. N. Bazaz.<sup>69</sup> Since the profitable trade of money lending was mostly dominated by Pundits and to some extent by Muslim Wani caste. It is thus, no wonder that Hindu money lenders strongly protested against the Relief Act, through 'protest Committee of Jammu and Kashmir and the Hindu Yuvak Sabha'.<sup>70</sup>

### **Modernization of Communications and opening the state to more exploitation**

Another significant development which marked the period of colonial presence in Kashmir was the modernization of means of surface communication, which has for reaching consequences on the socio-economic and socio-political life of state.<sup>71</sup>The introduction of the modern system of means of communication and other services “strengthened the bonds between the Kashmir’s and people in the rest of India ..... This had for reaching effect on the shaping of the political and economic thought of the people in the valley.”<sup>72</sup>The improvements in the communications with British India, evident from the opening of the Jehlum Valley Cart Road to wheeled traffic in 1890, connecting the Valley to the Punjab, led to a marked increase in the flow of trade with Punjab. For instance, in 1891-92, the value of imports from the Punjab into Kashmir amounted to Rs.6,616,145 and exports to Punjab to Rs.6,405,088, the total value of the trade being greater than all preceding years and exceeding that of 1889-90, the next best year, by Rs.40,734.<sup>73</sup>

State artisans were, however, adversely affected by competition from machine-made goods now increasingly available in the valley after the construction of the Jhelum Valley road in 1890 and the Banihal Cart Road (Connecting Srinagar with Jammu more directly) in 1922. Agriculture began to provide the only escape to the affected artisanal classes, therefore putting more pressure on land as had happened earlier in Bengal in the beginning of the industrial revolution in Britain.<sup>74</sup>

### **Modern Education which awakened the subjects**

The traditional education system of the state underwent a major shift with the deposition of Maharaja Pratap Singh from the executive authority in 1889 and the establishment of State Council to direct the affairs of the governance. Modern education became a central component of the state’s drive toward the bureaucratization along with lines of British India. The first initiative to introduce modern education was made by Christian missionaries when in 1888 beginning with the Church of Scotland establishing its branch in Jammu where it opened two schools. It also opened one high school and few primary schools in Srinagar and two schools in Anantnag; and a high school was opened in Baramulla by another missionary society called Roman Catholic Mission.<sup>75</sup>The missionary initiative was promptly responded by Kashmiri Pundits,<sup>76</sup>but Muslims, due to multiplicity of factors had shown a cold shoulder in receiving the modern education. Thus, until the beginning of the twentieth century one does not find even a single Muslim boy in the Christian missionary schools.<sup>77</sup>Among the many factors which explain the Muslim apathy to respond modern education, most prominent were their own ignorance, the conservative outlook of their religious leaders, and unsympathetic attitude of non-Muslims towards the Muslim students and the discriminatory policies of the Dogra administration.<sup>78</sup>Although the need for modern education was created by the bureaucratization of administration, the state did not however, felt any urgency to promote education among its inhabitants, since it relied on importing bureaucrats and other officials from British India to run its administration.<sup>79</sup>

By the early twentieth century, however, the state began to present itself as the promoter of education among its subjects. School curricula in the state were reorganized along the lines of the Punjab University syllabus and affiliated to the University. The ‘1910-11 Note on Education’ proudly proclaimed the existence of 2 colleges, 5 high schools, 172 primary schools 8 girl’s schools and one teacher’s training schools in the state.<sup>80</sup>True to its form, state was neither willing to persuade its masses about the benefits of education and nor it had made any special provision to attract the children of

under privileged sections. In response to the need for compulsory and free education suggested by Maharaja Pratap Singh,<sup>81</sup> the Education Minister and the Inspector of schools declined the suggestion by saying that the scheme was not feasible because the measure would be looked up on as 'Zoolom' (tyranny) and would, therefore, be dreaded by the uneducated parents rather than welcomed as a boon.<sup>82</sup> They would also suggest that "the Hindus and the high class Mussulmans will not like to see their children learn a profession while surrounded by the other Mussulaman children, at least for some time till these come up to the standard of Hindu children or the children of high class Mussalmans."<sup>83</sup> The arguments put forward against the implementation of free and compulsory primary education clearly reflects the communal and feudal nature of state bureaucracy.

The deliberate discrimination against Muslim masses was reflected clearly in the statistics of census reports of 1911 and 1921. At the beginning of 1910, there were only 15 educated Muslim males as compared to 453 Hindu males per thousand of population in the Jhelum Valley.<sup>84</sup> By the census of 1921, this number had jumped to a mere 19 for Muslims, while going up to 508 for Hindus.<sup>85</sup> These figures would be more disappointing if we consider the fact that among the Muslims the benefits of education had reached only to the elite section leaving the poor masses completely illiterate.<sup>86</sup>

The apathy of the Dogra administration towards the education of Muslim masses had convinced Muslims that nothing could save them except their own efforts. It was fully realized that the Government shirks its responsibility simply because of political considerations, apprehending that education would make them (the Muslims) conscious against their exploiters.<sup>87</sup> Backed by more advanced Muslim organizations in British India, some Kashmiri Muslim individuals began pleading that the state play a more active role in redressing the discrepancy between the educational statuses of the two communities of the state. They had also established, in 1905, a school of their own under the aegis of the Anjuman-i-Nusrat-ul-Islam which after a few years was raised to a High School. But one single school could not solve the universal problem of their education. Besides, its activities remained confined around the city only.<sup>88</sup> However, the pressure generated by the Muslim leadership with the help of Punjabi Muslim intelligentsia compelled the authorities to institute an office known as Special Inspector for Mohammedan Education<sup>89</sup> and to appoint an education Commission in May 1916, under the chairmanship of Mr. Sharp, "to investigate and advise the Durbar on educational arrangements in the state."<sup>90</sup> In his report Mr. Sharp admitted that the Muslims of Kashmir had been suffering from educational disabilities and that the need of hour was to improve their conditions.<sup>91</sup> The recommendations of Mr. Sharp were "sanctioned by His Highness but were lightly treated by his Ministers and instructions issued by him were seldom followed by those in-charge of Education Department who were invariably (non-Muslim) non-Kashmiri's."<sup>92</sup> By the nineteen twenties, notwithstanding the official apathy, the number of the Muslim students in educational institutions rose to become equal to, if not greater than the non-Muslim students,<sup>93</sup> thanks to the efforts of some dedicated and sincere leaders who left no stone unturned to persuade Muslims about the challenges of the times and the need to gain modern education.<sup>94</sup> Kashmiri diaspora played a significant role in this endeavor.<sup>95</sup> Several Muslims passed the level of secondary school and went to institutions of higher learning in British India. While in British India, these men gained more than just an education. They came into the direct contact with movements spearheaded by Indian Muslims, such as one lead by the Aligarh Muslim University and the Khilafat Movement launched by what is called Ali Brothers and backed by Gandhi. These educated youth were highly influenced by the Indian National movement

and its leadership. The modern education acquired in Indian universities thus, made the Muslim youth conscious about their rights and power they possessed to change the character of an irresponsible Government with the support of the oppressed masses. Upon returning to Kashmir, infused with the fervor of new ideas and armed with academic and professional degree, these men found the Dogra state unwilling and unable to accommodate their needs.<sup>96</sup> The state could no longer use its old strategy of pointing to the small numbers of educated Muslims to explain away their lack of representation in government service, since Kashmiri Muslims registered the highest increase in the number of literates between 1921 and 1931 of all communities in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.<sup>97</sup> Facing the prospect of unemployment and a seemingly rapidly disintegrating community, these youth consolidated into a leadership that would spread political consciousness in state and also spearhead an anti-feudal movement for a responsible government. These young men started a Reading Room at Fateh Kadal<sup>98</sup> which turned to be a harbinger of national consciousness in Kashmir and the first platform to the new middle class leadership to vent its political feelings.

### **Conclusion:**

Thus the newly educated young men who constituted the new middle class and who felt suffocated by the extremely narrow space provided to them by the feudal state to improve their socio-economic lot, made the best use of the simmering discontent created by the state and nurtured by the 'defective modernization' which was never beneficial to common masses but was richly harvested by the parasitic elite. Backed by some influential Muslim religious leaders<sup>99</sup> and organizations both within and outside the state the educated youth under a fire brand orator, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah [1905-1982] challenged the legitimacy of the Dogra regime and launched a movement to bring about the political modernization in the state by demanding legitimate rights of the masses and by pressurizing the establishment to democratize its institutions by recognizing the rights of its citizens and by making the state to change its body politics according to the needs of the time.

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