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Socio-economic history of Jammu and Kashmir from 1925-1948 with special reference to Maharaja Hari Singh

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Abstract

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is known as the crown of India. The state of Jammu and Kashmir has been ruled by many dynasties and each one has tried to develop the socio economic status of people of Jammu and Kashmir. But Dogra period of rule is seen as the golden period of development in for the state of Jammu and Kashmir. So the main objectives of the present study are as follows;

1. To study the social aspects of Jammu and Kashmir during the Maharaja Hari Singh's rule
2. To study the economic aspects of Jammu and Kashmir during the Maharaja Hari Singh's rule.
3. To study the overall harmonious development of Jammu and Kashmir during 1925-1948
4. To study the effects on socio economic development post Maharaja Hari Singh's Rule.

Keywords: Socio development, Cultural balance, Accession, Educational reforms, Health reforms

Introduction

Jammu and Kashmir is the north western state of India occupies a strategic place on the country's map with its border touching Pakistan, Tibet and China. The State has three distinct regions comprising Kashmir Valley, Jammu division and Ladakh. Each region has a specific resource base. Except for Jammu and Kathua districts the entire State is a mountainous region and the plateau of Ladakh, flanking the State on the east with lower population density is separated from the rest of the State by high mountain ranges, offers very peculiar problems of development and communication. The land of the State is highly fertile and water resources are also abundant.

History of Jammu and Kashmir

The history of Jammu and Kashmir is intertwined with the history of the broader Indian subcontinent and the surrounding regions, comprising the areas of Central Asia, South Asia and East Asia. Historically, Kashmir referred to the Kashmir Valley (Khan G.H, 1980) ^[1]. Today, it denotes a larger area that includes the Indian-administered union territories of Jammu and Kashmir (which consists of Jammu and the Kashmir Valley) and Ladakh, the Pakistan-administered territories of Occupied Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, and the Chinese-administered regions of Aksai Chin and the Trans-Karakoram Tract.

In the first half of the 1st millennium, the Kashmir region became an important centre of Hinduism and later of Buddhism; later in the ninth century, Shaivism arose. Islamization in Kashmir took place during 13th to 15th century and led to the eventual decline of the Kashmir Shaivism in Kashmir (Bazaz, P.N, 2002) ^[2]. However, the achievements of the previous civilizations were not lost. In 1339, Shah Mir became the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir, inaugurating the Shah Mir dynasty (Khan. M.I, 1978) ^[11]. For the next five centuries, Muslim monarchs ruled Kashmir, including the Mughal Empire, who ruled from 1586 until 1751, and the Afghan Durrani Empire, which ruled from 1747 until 1819. That year, the Sikhs, under Ranjit Singh, annexed Kashmir. In 1846, after the Sikh defeat in the First Anglo-Sikh War, the Treaty of Lahore was signed and upon the purchase of the region from the British under the Treaty of Amritsar, the Raja of Jammu, Gulab Singh, became the new ruler of Kashmir. The rule of his descendants, under the paramountcy (or tutelage) of the British Crown, lasted until 1947, when the former princely state became a disputed territory, now administered by three countries: India, Pakistan, and the People's Republic of China (Kaur, Ravinderjit, 2002).

Maharaja Hari Singh

Maharaja Hari Singh was born in September 1895. He was the son of Raja Amar Singh and a great grandson of Raja Amar Singh and a great grandson of Maharaja Gulab Singh. He joined the Mayo College, Ajmer in 1908 at the age of 13. Later on he was sent to Dehradun for military training. On his return he was appointed the Commander-in-Chief of the state forces in 1915 when he was only 20 years of age. He took up the post of senior member of the state council in 1922. Maharaja Hari Singh ascended the Gaddi in September 1925 but Raj tilak ceremony was performed in February 1926 at Jammu. The new Maharaja announced agriculture reforms and further extension of educational and other facilities (Rai. Mridhu, 2004) [25]. Maharaja Hari Singh was a modern ruler devoted to the idea of eradicating illiteracy, social evils and inequality from the state. He was especially moved by the plight of the agriculturists of his state who formed eighty percent of the population. One of his first reforms, the Agriculturists Relief Regulations of July 1926, focused on freeing the farmers from the exploitative clutches of the moneylender (Zutshi. U.K, 2007). This was drafted in Uri in Kashmir, after the Maharaja who was camped there, received a thousand petitions on the same day against the Sahukari system. His reform aimed to empower the farmer and address the starvation and disease common amongst them due to their enslavement to the moneylending class. The cooperative credit system and an annual farmers conference where he could be apprised of the issues being faced by the farming community were all part of the many measures taken by the Maharaja for the upliftment of the majority class.

Socio economic reforms during Maharaja Hari Singh's Rule

Some of the major socio economic reforms taken during the Maharaja's rule are mentioned below;

1. The Glancy Commission and Regulation No.1 of 1934

Maharaja set up a commission under the chairmanship of Mr. B. J. Glancy, referred to as the 'Glancy Commission' for the purpose of enquiring into the grievances of the people and to make its recommendations on the basis of such enquiry. The Glancy Commission submitted its report on March 1932 and made several recommendations mainly on the basis of religion, education and employment in the State services (Shah. S.K, 2006).

Jammu and Kashmir Women's Welfare Association

The Kashmiri Women's welfare association was founded in June 1927 A.D. in Kashmir and its Jammu Wing, in the following year, 1928 A.D. This association was founded with the efforts of Maharaja Hari Singh, well entrenched in western thinking made women's upliftment one of his prime objectives. Liberal grants-in-aid were bestowed to institutions where education was imparted to girls. It was the untiring efforts of Pandit Hargopal Koul and Pt. Janki Nath Kaul to foster women's welfare trust. Their jobs were to debate over other social evils besetting the community and evolve methods to achieve all-round progress. The association had four sections: (a). Education (b). Industrial (c). Health (d). Recreational. (Fayaz Farooq, 2008).

Each section was under a separate president and controlled by a sub-committee. "Tutorial Service Schools" for adult women were opened in the State. In these schools education

was imparted free. Attempts were made to give vocational training and health improvement schemes in order to liquidate destitution among women. Recreation parks were opened for women, so that they come out of isolation.

Freedom of Press

Kashmiri Pandits; the traditional learned scholars of Kashmir had produced outstanding people who excelled in Urdu and English print media inside and outside the State. The Birth of Press in Jammu and Kashmir goes back to 1924 A.D, when "Ranbir" was started by a Jammu based Hindu namely Lala Mulk Raj Saraf had published in Urdu. The name *Ranbir* was selected because of the name of the Maharaja Ranbir Singh. The paper continued till 1929 A.D, but on the complaint of Maharaja Hari Singh's chief secretary G.E.C Wakefield, the paper was banned on May 9, 1930 A.D. with the publication of the report of the Grievances Enquiry Commission as well as of other reports by B.J. Glancy which was submitted to the Maharaja brought forth the Press and Publications Act on April 25, 1932 A.D, to facilitate the publication of newspapers from both Srinagar and Jammu and provisions for the security of the Printing Press and newspapers were also modified. Maharaja Hari Singh was willing to give legitimate freedom to the Press because he could know the pulse of the people. He read the foreign and Indian papers and magazines with interest. He did not believe in choking the freedom of the Press as it was his belief that healthy criticism of the government policies would serve as feedback to his administration to redress the grievances of his subject. A progressive ruler he believed in press freedom. Maharaja Hari Singh took steps to facilitate the publication of papers from Srinagar and Jammu bringing forth the Press and Publication Act in April 1932 (Khan. Nayla. Ali, 2012).

Widow-Remarriage

The widows in the community were in pathetic and deplorable condition because remarriage was not allowed during those days. There were three thousand young widows at the time. Kashyap Bandhu had a deep impact on this social evil and he collected many volunteers who worked and promote widow remarriage. It was due to the efforts of the reformers that the number of widow remarriages began to increase day by day. More important, even the Sanatan Dharam Purohits, the standard bearers of orthodoxy, recognized the validity of widow remarriage. It was the courage and perseverance of the reformers that brought about the widow remarriage Act of 1933 A.D. which legalized marriages to Hindus (Khan. G.H.).

Transformation from Pheran to Saree

Before 1930 A.D. Kashmiri Pandits wore *Pheran* (A long robe, traditionally worn in Kashmir for an over coat and falls below the calf of the leg) which was without undergarments beneath it, which fosters disgrace to the community. In winter, the people of Kashmir put on *Pherans* generally made of woolen cloth so as to keep themselves warm. Moreover this dress was a sort of lethargy and dizziness. Though it is said, the people under the *Pheran* wore *pyjamas* or *Shalwar* but the fact is not borne out by folk literature. In rural Kashmir, both Hindus and Muslims generally preferred to remain without *pyjama* (trousers) and *izars* (undergarment). Non-availability of undergarments would often prove an impediment in their

way of taking frequent tours to the near and distant places (Khan. M.I, 2013)

Local social activists requested the women folk to change the dress and started wearing Sarees and that too Khadi Sarees. He besets with resistance initially but with the efforts of his volunteers he was triumph in ushering the change of the dress. The change of outlook was the result of education and the opening up of the valley to the outside world.

Girl's education

Kashyap Bandhu greatest contribution was the spread of education among the girls and with his efforts *Vasanta School* for girls was established. The Sabha advocated that religious instruction should be provided in all schools under State control frequented by Hindu girls. It worked for the development of Hindu art, culture and religion. The Sabha worked for the upliftment of women's and social equality.

Weekly congregation

Another activity of the community was to gather Pandits on weekly organized at Hari Parbhat. The main purpose of this was to imbibe unity, brotherhood, common hood, social coherence among Pandit community. Kashyap Bandhu fosters mental reformation among the community members by introducing social reforms. To make social reforms an effective movement, children of the six and above were organized locality-wise, to rally in groups chanting the mantra: "Pheran Gaw Kahre Layen Bakh, Dapan Dichnam Kmeeza Sharaak, Ditim Pyzaar Yem Samayan Mubarak Dhоти Shilwaran" meaning (Give up Pheran, O dear these are agents of degradation, adopt soothing dress) (Rai. Mridhu, Op.cit, p.249).

Mochchi-Phol enterprise

A new enterprise was initiated by Kashmiri Pandits for collecting contributions and donations both in kind and cash to help the needy and widows. Kashyap Bandhu and his volunteers used to visit each and every house to collect rice and other things just to give solace to the economically and socially backward person. He started „*SILAI KENDRA*“ to give training to the needy widows so that they could sustain themselves.

(g) Infusing a spirit of patriotism among Kashmiri Pandits and helping the Maharaja in maintaining the State against anti-State elements.

(h) Protecting and looking after the religious places of the Hindus, fighting for the restoration of those religious places to Hindu Community which had been under dispute for a long time.

The Kashmiri Pandits social uplift association

The evolution of this association came into being in the year 1931A.D. at Ganderbal in Kashmir by dint of some officials of the Postal, Medical and forest department. The aims and objectives of this association were purely based on social causes. The founding fathers of this association endeavored to elevate the status of women of their community and bringing them on to some moral, social and cultural basis like other sisters of the country. It was a step towards the recognition of woman's individuality and took up the cause of enforced widowhood and child marriage. Pandit Ram Chand Koul- Post Master Ganderbal, Pt. Niranjan Nath Ganjoo- Sub- Assistant Surgeon, Pt. Damodhar- Postal

Clerk, Pandit Shamboo Nath- Forest Guard, Pandit Naranjan Nath- Compounder Ganderbal Dispensary and Pt. Keshav Nath, were elected office bearers of the association. The association emphasized on the education of the Pandit girls who lacks due to ignorance of their family (Saraf. Mohammad Yusuf, Kashmiri's fight for freedom, Vol-1).

Revamping of health services in the state

First reorganisation and development in medical department

Few months before the assumption of powers by Maharaja Hari Singh, Medical Department was reorganised and certain changes were made in its administrative set up. Though this reorganisation was effected in 1924 during the reign of predecessor ruler yet the benefits of this system and its full implementation was effected in later years. The post of the SS which was earlier held by Residency Surgeon as a collateral charge was abolished and was replaced by Director of Medical Services (hereafter abbreviated as DMS). The director did not have any additional duty and so he could fully concentrate on his work and performed his duties with more efficiency. The provincial level officers continued to hold their post as earlier and the administrative control of the department remained with the Home Member of State Council. For sometime Colonel J. Husband (last Superintending Surgeon) retained the charge of DMS, there after it was taken by Colonel J.H. Hugo. Subsequently DMS one after another were succeeded by officers from British India or retired officers from Indian Medical Services (IMS). For the first time in 1941, DMS appointed was a State subject. He was Govind Lal Vaishnavi. At that time the State was divided into ten districts. For medical purposes medical administration of district was placed under District Medical Officer (DMO). 6 The post of CMO, who was provincial level officer, was abolished and next lower level to DMS in hierarchy was DMO. As there were ten districts, five in Jammu and five in Kashmir, so ten DMO'S were appointed to look after the health administration of their respective districts. Maharaja Hari Singh was pioneer in placing the infrastructure of the MD on sound footing. During his reign one of the biggest Hospitals in the sub-continent was added to the existing health institutions of the State which was one of the two Hospitals built in the State. These Hospitals were larger than the previous ones, well equipped with new technological equipments and trained staff. His rule was also having the distinction of opening of first Tuberculosis Department not only in the State, but in the whole sub-continent and thereby strengthening the medical policies like epidemic policy. He increased the number of medical institutions, procured qualified and specialised medical staff, paid attention to medical education of natives which led to strengthening of Medical Department (MD). The dispensaries which were earlier a sort of mud structures were renovated and reconstructed and placed on modern lines. The time period of Maharaja Hari Singh also witnessed the opening of drug manufacturing laboratory which checks the standard of medicines as well as manufacture medicine in the State (Bazaz, P.N, The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir, p.195).

On his accession, Maharaja Hari Singh made an inspectional tour in Jammu province. He visited Samba and Udhampur. In his tour to Udhampur, he found the dispensary there in a deplorable situation. The dressing was most inadequate and badly kept and the instruments were rusted due to improper

look after. Though all the floors of this miniature Hospital required repairs yet bedding and stock of medicine in this dispensary was found to be more than sufficient. An operating and dressing room was also present but he found that the number of minor operations decreased as compared to Year 1922. The transfers in this institution were too frequent which led to its awful condition. This tour and such other tours made him realise that quality in health service and health care institutions however was not in synchronisation with quantity. Till then, there had been horizontal expansion of health care and he tried to make it much effective. So, in addition to opening up of new institutions he laid stress on providing earlier ones with better staff and modern equipment's and technology. On a similar tour to Samba town, Maharaja observed that there was scarcity of water supply in Samba town. Necessity was to introduce a piped water supply and sanitary measures there. In addition to this he also opined that there was requirement of a Sub Assistant Surgeon (SAS) in addition to Assistant Surgeon (AS) in the town.⁹ Maharaja Hari Singh was a dynamic personality and he himself made inspection tours in certain areas and tried to find out the shortcomings and acted accordingly. This acquainted him to the problems and helped in introducing the desired reforms. He built various health institutions, strengthened epidemic policy, promoted women health care, medical education and passed various acts and laws in medical sector. The detailed work done by MD under him is discussed in present chapter.

Acts and regulations passed in health sector

1. Vaccination Act of 1928 A.D: This act is called Jammu and Kashmir Vaccination Act No. II of 1928. The act was sanctioned by Maharaja vide Development Notification No. 780/S dated 18th of July 1928. This Act prohibited inoculation and made vaccination compulsory by animal lymph for children in certain municipalities, cantonments and notified areas. The children above six months to eight in case of girls and fourteen in case of boys must be compulsorily vaccinated in vaccination circles unless and until child is declared unfit for vaccination by the vaccinator. The vaccination was provided free of cost and steps were ensured by this act that no child would remain unvaccinated.

2. Juvenile Smoking Regulation 1929 A.D: Juveniles in the State were found indulging in chewing tobacco and smoking *biris* and Cigarettes. Juvenile smoking which affected the health of adolescents was an issue of worry for the State and it caught the attraction of Maharaja. In this connection Juvenile Smoking Regulation which aimed at banning the smoking activities of adolescents was passed which came into effect from 1st of *Katik*, 1929 (1929 A.D). This Act No. II of 1929 (*Samvat*) was sanctioned by Maharaja Bahadur vide Minister- in -Waiting's endorsement No. 2050/c dated 4th July 1929.¹⁴ According to this act it was unlawful for a person to give or sell or attempt to sell tobacco to a person under the age of sixteen years except on the written order of the parent, guardian or employer of such person and a fine of twenty rupees in first conviction, fifty in second conviction and fine to be increased subsequently in other convictions but not to exceed one hundred in any case. This act also authorised any *Lambardar*, *Zaildar*, teacher of a recognised school or affiliated college, member of a municipal Committee,

member of Notified Area Committee, legal practitioner, medical practitioner or magistrate to seize and destroy tobacco from any juvenile if he was found chewing or smoking tobacco.

3. The Jammu and Kashmir Village Sanitation Act 1933:

This act is known as Act No V of 1933. This act was sanctioned by Maharaja vide Revenue Minister's notification dated 13th July, 1933. This act aimed at making better provisions of sanitation for villages. Before the passing of this act sanitary measures were observed in cities and towns only and municipalities were limited to urban areas only. This act established local bodies in rural areas for sanitary drive. (Khan. G.H, *Op.cit*, p.330).

4. Medical Registration Act 1941:

Like other medical acts this act was also passed through out colonial India. In princely Jammu and Kashmir this act was called the Jammu and Kashmir Medical Registration Act No. IV of 1941. It was passed by Maharaja Hari Singh on 1st May, 1941. This act aimed at the constitution of a Medical Council for Jammu and Kashmir. The council was a statutory body which consisted of elected and nominated members in addition to a nominated president, all were registered medical practitioners. The function of the council was to register medical practitioners, give recognition to medical schools and universities and to give recognition to medical qualifications. The act aimed at registration of those professionals who acquired medical education from the list of medical colleges provided in the act and also to the recognised medical degree or diploma holders recognised by the medical council. This Act was passed to deal with the issue of quacks and quackery. The practitioners of indigenous medicine were termed as quacks. The practitioners of western medicine demanded for registration of those practitioners who possess a degree from a recognised school and who worked on the principles of uniform curriculum. The practices of *Ayurvedic* and *Unani* were exactly contrary to these demands. They differ in their practices and also did not have any formal qualification.

Glancy comission and recommendations to medical department

By his inspection tours Maharaja Hari Singh came to know about the problems being faced by the people and shortcomings in his administrative set up that helped him in framing different policies and improvements. In order to know more detailed nature of the problems faced by his people and their complaints in a better way, he passed orders for the constitution of a grievances commission, known as Glancy Commission (GC). It was constituted on 12th Nov. 1931 and consisted of a European B. J. Glancy as its president and four non-official members of this commission. (Hamdard, 22 August 1936). In the public health sector, GC received numerous complaints relating to management of municipalities, poor water supply to some areas, supply of medicines, working of medical officials, etc. It was reported to the Commission that large expenditure had been incurred on establishment and improving of outlying areas of Srinagar city rather than on the city proper, due to which it remained dirty. The Glancy Commission recorded the overall number of medical institutions to 102, out of which forty five were in Jammu province, forty in Kashmir and seventeen in frontier

districts. The commission recommended for expansion of medical institutions and facilities by adopting a definite programme for establishment of dispensaries. According to the commission the medical department needed improvement in various ways. For this the Commission chalked out a plan and proposed to open, at least, five dispensaries yearly in order to increase the number of medical institutions so that all regions and all sections of people could avail medical facility. Out of five dispensaries, buildings for two or three dispensaries were proposed to be constructed annually and others to be accommodated in hired buildings. The GC also pointed out that the medicines supplied by druggists did not fulfil the claims promised by them. This meant that the quality of medicines was not good. Keeping this complaint in view, Maharaja passed a Regulation in 1936, which was known as Jammu and Kashmir Druggist Regulation No of 199. This regulation aimed at improving the quality of the drugs provided to medical officers by druggists. Some of the other developments in the health sector were as;

1. Beginning of medical education and training.
2. Beginning of pharmaceutical industry. Epidemic policy.
3. Anti-rabic treatment and centres in state etc.

Conclusion

To conclude this work we can say Maharaja Hari Singh inherited the vast state of Jammu Kashmir comprising of the Jammu Province, Jāgirs of Poonch and Chenani, Province of Kashmir and Frontier Provinces of Ladakh, Baltistan and Gilgit. The credit of consolidating a vast territory and the founding of the state rests upon the vision of the warrior and statesman, Maharaja Gulab Singh, the great-grandfather of Maharaja Hari Singh. Maharaja Hari Singh was the fourth and the last Dogra monarch of the state. His rule from 1925 to 1947, saw a series of tumultuous historical events which would have shaken a mere mortal but saw him rising to the occasion stoically. His reign heralded a sea of reforms and people friendly policies which endeared him to all his subjects, irrespective of class, religion and gender. Maharaja Hari Singh had inherited the highest role in a monarchy at a time when the very institution was being questioned. Despite having absolute power vested upon him by virtue of his royal position, Maharaja Hari Singh was sensitive to the changing times and made efforts to gradually democratise the administration. His Kingship was rooted in the concepts of social justice. His approach to governance was clear in his iconic coronation address where he said, "For me all communities, religions and races are equal. All religions are mine and justice is my religion". Maharaja Hari Singh was a modern ruler devoted to the idea of eradicating illiteracy, social evils and inequality from the state. He was especially moved by the plight of the agriculturists of his state who formed eighty percent of the population. One of his first reforms, the Agriculturists Relief Regulations of July 1926, focused on freeing the farmers from the exploitative clutches of the moneylender. To bring about socio-economic equality Maharaja Hari Singh put in concerted efforts in the drive against illiteracy, knowing very well that education was the biggest factor for social upward mobility. Progress in the field of education was across regions and the Maharaja particularly introduced Urdu as a medium of instruction to make it more attractive to his Muslim subjects. Modern education and exposure made Maharaja Hari Singh committed to the cause of social equality which

included women. He took many steps to remove gender-biased practices and elevated the status of women in the society. His measures focused on eradicating social evils like female infanticide and dowry. Maharaja Hari Singh was everybody's king. He eradicated untouchability and opened the doors of the Temples to the Dalits. Like the Dogra Maharajas before him, he regarded all religions equal and would be present at the Mosque to exchange Eid greetings with his Muslim subjects, many of whom were both his friends and courtiers holding high positions.

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