

Emergence of Political Consciousness in Kashmir during the Dogra Period (1846-1947)

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Abstract: *In this paper researchers try to find out the factors responsible for the emergence of political consciousness in Kashmir during the period under study. we will try to find out what was the impact of Indian national movement on the freedom struggle of Kashmir. we will try to find out the what was the impact of various factors upon the masses of Kashmir. In this paper researchers try to explain the role of Treaty of Amritsar and others factors as well. The effect of Treaty of Amritsar will be discussed in detail. The sale-deed might have prompted the Dogras to oppress the Kashmiri masses to unbearable extent so that they could regain the money spent in the shortest possible time. The vulnerability of the people might have made this exploitation easy for the Dogras.*

Keywords: Dogra, Nazrana, Rasum, Mandri, Ashgal, Haq-i-Malikana, Wazir-i-Wazarat, Begar, jagir, Jagirdar, chak and maufi

1. Introduction

The Treaty of Amritsar, [1] by virtue of which Jammu and Kashmir state was handed over to Maharaja Gulab Singh and his male descendants with an independent authority over the internal affairs of the state, maintained the dynastic, feudal, ruler-centred and religion-centred rule of the medieval ages. This presents a contrast to the overall milieu of British India, which under the impact of British policies saw a period of transition from medieval to modern age.

The Treaty of Amritsar was not an exception to the general policy according to which the Government of India conducted its relations with other native states at that time. During this period the relations between the native states and the British Indian government were conducted under the policy of subordinate isolation (1813-1858). [2] This policy had two important features. First, the foreign policy of these states was subordinated to British Paramountancy in order to avoid any possible threat of the emergence of a united front on behalf of the princes against the British authority. Second, the rulers of these states were given a free hand in their internal affairs. [3] Not only this, were also assured of protection against the internal revolts and external aggressions.

Throughout the course of history a corrupt and decadent rule was replaced either by the challenges of internal revolt or external aggression. The British imperialism freed the princes from both of these dangers and the result was that indulged in gross misgovernment. The policy of subordinate isolation was changed in 1858 as a result of 1857. It was after the revolt that the British government began to take some interest to reform the rotten and corrupt administration of the states. In order to safeguard the imperial interest and to make some effort towards the administrative reform of the state, a full fledged British residency was established in Srinagar as late as 25 September 1885.

The expected fears of Maharaja Gulab Singh, his officials and his land grantees prompted the policy of isolating the Britishers. He did not want that the tourists and missionaries

should carry to the British India details of the mistreatment of the people [4] in whose welfare he showed very little interest. [5] To the British he owed his throne and feared their interference should his manner of rule become known. For a long period the state remained pathetic to providing basic medical and educational facilities to its subjects. It also remained hostile towards the Christian missionaries - the pioneers of modern medical and educational amenities in Kashmir. [6] It was after facing stiff opposition from the state that Robert Clark succeeded in opening a school in Srinagar on 18 April 1864. [7] Such parents who sent their children to the missionary school received domiciliary visits from the police. [8] They were told that if their children went to school they would be banished to Gilgit. Similarly, Dr. Elmslie, the designated doctor to the Kashmir medical mission, was not allowed to have a house/ room for performing his duties. His life was hard and difficult, as Mr. Biscoe, records that he had no hospital, his operations being performed under the trees, also orders were issued that the people were not to visit the doctor and sepoys were stationed around to keep them away as the sick persisted in coming for relief. Several patients suffered imprisonment for disobeying the order of the authorities. [9]

Robert thorp was the first foreigner who had sacrificed his life for the freedom of Kashmir from the clutches of the Dogra regime. He had come to Kashmir to see the birth place of his mother. But when he reached this land he found misery all round. He found that the Britishers were ignorant of the situation in Kashmir at the hands of the Dogra Maharaja. He was the first Britisher to have openly accepted this fact. [10] For purposes entirely selfish, he argued, that the Britishers deliberated and sold millions of human beings into the absolute power of one meanest, most avaricious, cruel and unprincipled men that ever sat upon a throne. When he saw that the Maharaja had pursued a system of oppression and misrule, he started writing articles in various British papers. Though he being a British national, he criticized government of England for bringing all this misery to the people of Kashmir. As Kashmir was his motherland, he did not tolerate injustice and atrocities being committed on the Kashmiris. [11] He desired the setting up of a

commission of enquiry against the Maharaja for his crimes against the people, and thus he was exiled from Kashmir. But he refused to oblige and return again to fight against the misgovernment in Kashmir. He had gone to visit the hill known as *Takht-i-Suliman* near the Dal Lake in Srinagar and the murderers employed by the Maharaja descended upon him, which resulted in the death of this brave and courageous man on 22 November 1868. [12]

The most crucial consequence that followed the treaty of Amritsar was that it caused devastating effects upon the majority community of Kashmir i.e Muslims. "The sale deed of 1846", writes P.L. Lakhanpal, put a largely populated Muslim state under the Dogra rule which had been characterized as despotic and tyrannical. [13] Taking advantage of the so called Sale-Deed of Kashmir, the Dogra Maharajas considered Kashmir as their purchased property and ruled over their subjects as a master rules over his slaves.

Though the Muslims constituted 80 per cent of the total population of the state, their share in government services was simply nominal. [14] Even as late as 1931 one finds the share of the Muslims in the state services was not more than 15 per cent. [15] Gawasha Lal Koul, though being well disposed towards the Maharajas, remarks, "Maharaja Pratap Singh would say don't give too much to Rajputs, use Kashmiri pandits as much as you can and see that the Muslims do not starve." The Revenue Department that had dealings with the Muslim masses was from top to bottom monopolized by the non-Muslims. The non-Muslim officials not only maltreated the Muslim masses but also fattened themselves on illegal exactions known as *Nazrana* and *Rasum* imposed on the Muslim peasantry. [16]

The Maharajas also encouraged the contractors belonging to their own community and completely ignored the interests of the local aspirants. It is interesting to note that they invited the Hindu contractors from outside the state [17] and offered them contracts even at the cost of the state exchequer. [18] The state policy of pampering the non-local, non-Muslim contractors was a great factor that nursed resentment among the locals. It can be gauged from the fact that demand to abolish this practice figured in the memorandum submitted by some prominent Muslim representatives of Kashmir on behalf of the local Muslims to Indian Viceroy, Lord Reading in 1924: [19]

"The government contracts particularly those relating to forests, roads and construction should be granted to the state nationals in general and to the Muslims in particular".

The Muslims had not only to pay *Mandri* and *Ashgal* but they had to pay marriage tax as *Sathrashahi* also. [20] Added to this, the Hindu subjects were totally exempted from the notorious exaction of *Beggar* (forced labour) and the whole brunt of it exclusively fell upon the Muslims, especially peasantry. It is also noted that the Kashmiri Muslim peasantry was deprived of *Haqq-i-Malikana* (proprietary rights) whereas the same rights were enjoyed by the peasantry of Jammu province. [21]

The state not only discriminated against the Muslims on economic front but what proved more crucial was that it also

interfered with their religious liberties. Without caring for the religious susceptibilities of the Muslims, the government confiscated many religious places of Muslims namely *Khanqah-i-Sokhta*, *Khanqah-i-Bulbul shah*, *Khanqah-i-Dara-Shikoh*, *Pather Masjid*, *Malashah-i-Bagh mosque (Ganderbal)*, *Khanqah-i-Sofi Shah* and the Srinagar *Eid Gah*. [22] The rulers added insult to the injury when they converted some confiscated Muslim shrines and mosques into store houses for grains and ammunition. [23]

The Dogras demonstrated their bias when they promulgated a law according to which if any Muslim would embrace Hinduism he was within his rights to inherit property and enjoy guardianship over his children, whereas in case a Hindu became a Muslim, he was deprived of all such rights. [24] This discriminatory attitude of the state against the Muslim community of Kashmir considerably boiled the blood of the Muslims which is amply clear by the fact that it was one of the main grievances of the Muslim community which they submitted to Maharaja Hari Singh through a memorandum in 1931 and repeatedly asked for its abrogation in the annual sessions of the Muslim conference. To quote from the memorandum: [25]

"As a proof of the fact that Muslim subjects of your highness will in future be treated fairly, a declaration may kindly be made immediately to the effect that there would be complete religious freedom of the state and that conversion would entail no confiscation of property in favour of relatives as is the practice at present your highness, who, we believe fully recognize the value of religious liberty and tolerance, will agree that there is no justification for a person to be deprived of his property on his conversion to another religion, for it amounts to religious interference and in the presence of such practice, your highness, Muslim subjects can not have any sense of security in the matter of their being treated fairly".

While the Muslims were reeling under the religious fanaticism of their rulers, the community had at the same time to channel to voice its grievances. The state did not even tolerate the submission of memorandums. It may be noted that when it came to know of the memorandum submitted secretly by some prominent Muslim citizens of Kashmir to Lord Reading in 1924 regarding the redressal of their religious and economic grievances, it persecuted all of them. [26] Khawaja Sad-ud-Din shawl was exiled and the *jagir* of Hassan Shah Naqeshbandi was confiscated. The two Mirwaizes were let off with a warning, but all official privileges enjoyed by them were immediately withdrawn. Khawaja Nur Shah Naqeshbandi was forced to resign from the post of Tahsildar and Agaha Sayyid Hussain Shah Jalai was dismissed from Zaidari and his *jagir* was also confiscated. When in 1931 the Maharaja, under the pressure of 13 July 1931 incident asked the Kashmiri Muslims to submit their grievances in writing, the demand for right of expression and formation of Anjumans (associations) figured prominently in the list of demands: [27]

Your highness's subjects most respectfully submit that no permanent peace is possible unless the same law be enforced in the state for freedom of press, freedom of speech and for the establishment of Anjumans (association) as obtains in British India. As matters stand we are deprived of

all the ways and means of intellectual and economic progress. Our wise men are unable to benefit the people by their wisdom and our masses cannot improve their condition without organization.

Composition and attitudes of Bureaucracy:

Whenever the forest guard and forester come to me for bribe and if I shall not pay the hush money to them, they will complain to range officer. Hence even the firewood of my domesticated tree (willow) will be declared as state property.

Abdul Ahad Azad

Grievances against the Dogra Raj were many, but the most crucial one that created a strong resentment among the masses, in general and the sensitive and local section of Muslim population- educated youth, in particular, was the recruitment policy of the government in state services and the rapacious and communal dispositions of the bureaucracy. I will also see with the help of statistical data furnished by different varieties of contemporary sources as to how far the Muslims were justified in their pleadings. Further the role of Bureaucracy in fuelling the discontent of Kashmiri Muslims will also be examined.

During the initial phase of the Dogra rule, the Maharaja handed over all the key positions to non-local Hindus [28] and appointed Local Pandits on clerical positions. [29] To ones utter dismay in 1872 one does not find even a single Kashmiri Muslim out of a population of 327700 occupying even a lowest position in state services, whereas out of 75,000 populations of Kashmiri Pandits 5572 were working as clerks. [30] With the passage of time the local Pandits rose to higher positions, especially in the revenue department. In 1890 one finds all the positions of Revenue Department from village Patwari to *Wazir-i-Wazarat* (Deputy Commissioner) being monopolized by the Kashmiri pandits. In this context it is revealing to quote Lawrence,

"In Kashmir the revenue administration proceeds from the patwari, the village accountant and he is a pandit. Over the patwaris was a small band of pandits, who were employed in the tehsil in various revenue capacities. Over the patwari and tehsil pundits was a Tehsildar and one or two Naib-Tehsildars, mostly pandits. There were fifteen Tahsils and these Tahsils were divided into three districts or wazarats, which were presided over by the officers known as wazir wazarats, all of whom were pandits".

With the famous memorandum of 1924 the memorialists attached a statement prepared on the basis of the civil list showing extremely inadequate representation of the Muslim community in government services. According to this statement, the number of non-Muslim gazetted officers in Kashmir valley was 421, who drew as pay a sum of Rs 16,50,114. However, the number of gazetted officers belonging to Muslim community was hardly 55 whose pay amounted to Rs 1,47,325. [31] It may be noted that the majority of these Muslim officers were outsiders, who hardly enjoyed any formidable say in government affairs. To substantiate the fact that these Muslim officers were just pawns with no say. In this context it is worth to quote Sheikh Muhammad Abdullaha [32]

"No doubt there were some non Kashmiri Muslim officials of higher rank in the administration of Maharaja Harisingh but they could not decide the matters on their own choice. I applied for scholarship and my application was forwarded to education minister for his consideration. The minister concerned namely Agha Sayyid Hussain Razvi called me to his office and expressed his helplessness in sanctioning the scholarship. While explaining his position in the state apparatus, he told me that his example was like that of a gramophone machine".

During the reign of Maharaja Pratab Singh (1885-1925), the administration was reorganized on modern lines, necessitating the man power well versed with new skills of administration. Therefore, the rulers once again embarked on the policy of importing officials from outside Kashmir. [33] This created a strong resentment among Kashmir's especially against the Kashmiri Pandits who constituted official class of the Kashmir society. [34] It was in response to an agitation launched by them that in 1927 a law defining the term *state subject* was passed according to which preference in state services was to be given to the state subjects. [35] This positive response of the state to the demand "Kashmir for Kashmir", however, did not make any difference to Kashmiri Muslims. The following tables would clearly bring out the policy of discrimination adopted by the Dogra Maharajas against the overwhelming majority Muslim population of Kashmir in state services. [36] Table-1 Creed wise representation of gazetted positions in various departments:

SR.NO	Hindus	Muslims
State Department	3	-
Personal Deptt.	7	2
Military Secretary Deptt.	18	-
Foreign and Political Secretariat.	2	1
Games, Fisheries, Visitors bureau	2	1
Police Deptt.	35	5
Municipalities	4	1
Sanitary Deptt.	61	13
Dharmarth Deptt.	2	-
Roadcess Fund	1	-
Co-operative Deptt.	3	3
Civil veterinary Deptt.	-	2
Agriculture and Horticulture	4	2
Census Deptt.	2	1
Public works Deptt.	18	-
Irrigation Deptt.	10	-
Electric Deptt.	4	-
Telephone and Telegraph	1	-
Home secretariat	3	-
Medical and Jails	26	4
Finance and development Secretariat.	13	1
Accounts, audits, stamps and treasures	3	-
Customs and excise Deptt.	8	-
Industries, Mining	8	1
Sericulture Deptt.	5	-
Stationary and Press	35	5
Forest	37	8
Judicial Deptt.		

Table 2: Creed wise representation of gazetted and non-gazetted positions in various state departments

Sr.NO.	Hindus	Muslims
Revenue minister	1	-

Secretary	-	1
Assistant secretary	1	-
Superintendents	2	1
Head clerks	8	1
Clerks	22	4
Copyists	-	1
Jamadars	10	4
Chaprasis	2	-
Governors	2	-
Assistant governors	8	2
Wazir-i-wazarats	2	2
Revenue assistants	28	10
Naibtehsildars	26	5
Total	113	31

Ordinary constables	426	426
Total	800	626

Table 5: Department of Education

Sr.No.	Hindus	Muslims
Education minister	-	1
Secretary education minister	1	-
Assistant secretary	1	-
Director education	1	-
College principals	2	-
School inspectors	2	-
Assistant school inspectors	5	1
College professors	29	3
High school headmasters	10	1
Total	51	6

Department of Customs

Sr.No.	Hindus	Muslims
Inspector General customs	1	-
Superintendents	2	-
Deputy inspector class 1	3	-
Deputy inspector class 2	5	-
Deputy inspector class 3	9	-
Clerks	21	2
Superintendent excise(clarks)	35	-
	74	16
Total	150	19

Department of Justice

Sr.NO.	Hindus	Muslims
chief justice	1	-
Registrar	1	1
deputy registrar	-	1
Session judge	2	-
Additional session judge	2	-
Additional district magistrate	2	-
Sub judge	9	-
Munsifs	12	1
Government adovocates	1	-
Public prosecutors	2	-
TOTAL	33	3

Table 3: Department of Health

SR.NO	Hindus	Muslims
Chief medical officer	1	-
Assistant surgeons	9	1
Sub assistant surgeons	36	5
Laboratory assisatnat	1	-
Senior compounders	2	-
Junior compounders	53	4
Female compounders	2	-
Nurses	1	-
Female compounders	3	11
Male helpers	38	12
Cooks	29	9
Total	175	32

Table 4: Department of Police

SR.NO	Hindus	Muslims
Inspector general police	1	-
Deputy inspector general police	1	1
Superintendents of police	6	1
Traffic superintendents	9	-
Inspector police	17	-
Sub inspecpector police	40	10
Head constables	143	91
Constables class 1	157	97

Thus it is amply borne out that the Muslim representation in different branches of administration was nominal even in 1931-32. Between 1910 and 1930 the Muslim representation in state services did not exceed 15 per cent both in gazetted and non-gazetted ranks. Now the questions arise as to how far the Muslims were justified in alleging the government for having ignored them deliberately and how far the state was right in defending its policy by saying that the Muslims were educationally too backward to be appointed or given adequate representation in the administration. [37]

It is a fact that in comparison to Hindus, the Muslims of Kashmir were late to start modern education, but even then they acquired the requisite qualifications. The state adopted a discriminatory attitude towards them and devised ways and means to stop their entry into the influential offices of the government. As early as 1909, there were many Muslims who had first class in Arts (10+2) and by 1925 one finds the sizeable number of Muslim graduates. Yet the share of Muslim representation in the state services was significantly meager. [38]

The plea of the government and its apologists was also questioned by the Galancy Commission (1931-32) saying that there were twelve graduates and 133 matriculates among Muslims who were unemployed when the commission began its hearings. [39] The plight of Kashmiri Muslims can further be gleaned from the fact that even the posts of menials such as *khidmatgars* and cooks were denied to them. And even when no educational qualification had been prescribed for class 4th employees and invariably all of them were illiterate, yet the Muslim representation on such positions was less than 25 per cent. Instead of encouraging the educated Muslim youth, the government adopted a policy of discouraging them. [40] It not only denied suitable positions to the highly educated Muslims, but also adopted very strict rules to forestall their entry into the administration once they started returning from different British Indian universities with high academic qualifications. A glaring example of this dismal state of affairs is Sheikh Muhammad Abdullaha who inspite of being M. Sc in Chemistry was appointed merely as a school teacher, [41] whereas only a decade earlier (1920) one finds an illiterate person namely Makhan Singh holding the post of *Wazir-i-Wazarat* (Deputy Commissioner) of Mirpur. [42]

It is strange that on the one hand, the government justified its policy of over representation of Kashmiri Hindus in the

administration on the plea that the Muslims were educationally backward and on the other, it did not take any steps to encourage Muslims in favor of modern education. On the contrary, they were discouraged from receiving modern education by denying them positions with their qualifications. More so they were denied the patronage which was invariably bestowed upon the non-muslim students [43]. Little wonder therefore that the architects of the Muslim Conference were those young men of Kashmir who were denied the positions which they expected by virtue of their qualifications. It is also interesting to note that the Reading Room Party- the forerunner of the Muslim Conference - mainly focused its attention on anti-Muslim appointment policy of the state. [44] The role of the discriminatory policy of the government in alienating the Muslims from the state can be inferred from the following remarks of Sheikh Muhammad Adullaha who was repeatedly denied what he otherwise deserved or expected: an opportunity to do B.Sc in Jammu, a seat for M.B.B.S, a scholarship for going abroad for further studies, a scholarship for doing M.Sc at Aligarh and last but not the least, an equitable position to his qualification - M.Sc Chemistry [45]:

After my constant failure I reached the conclusion that to expect justice from the prevailing system was a futile exercise. Slowly I began to identify my personal failures with the collective national tragedies.

Agrarian crisis:

Are there also zamindars, [46] tenants, landless village brethren and the big *chakdars*? Do there also the idlers enjoy sumptuous dishes and the working class suffers for the want of a morsel of food?

Ghulum Ahmad Mahajur

Though each section of the Muslim Community was seething with the discontentment owing to the oppression Kashmir was reeling under, the fact remains that the most discontented lot was that of the peasant class, the biggest segment of the population of Kashmir. The causes of their discontentment were many, but the most crucial were the confiscation of proprietary rights in land and the oppression they were subjected to by the state and its supporting structure - *jagirdars*, [47] *chakdars*, [48] and *maufidars*. [49]

Like any medieval society the social formation of Kashmiri society during the period covered under this study was feudal like as the major portion of the peasant produce was appropriated by the state and its collaborators. Immediately after the Dogras took over as the rulers of Kashmir they declared the whole land of Kashmir as the state property. [50] While this declaration was obviously aimed at legitimizing the maximization of land revenue and other demands, it's no less purpose was to facilitate the revoking of land grants enjoyed by the Muslim *Jagirdars* and *Maded-Mash* holders and to create a new supporting structure to act as the props of the Raj. [51] The new props were mainly recruited from the Hindu community who were considered the only faithful subjects to rely upon. [52]

A big portion of land was appropriated by the *Jagirdars*, *Chakdars* and *Maufidars*. This can be gauged by the fact that more than 12 per cent of the total revenue of the state was assigned for *jagirs* and *maufis*. In Kashmir valley alone an area of 2, 91, 689 acres was under the various categories of landlords. [53]

The most critical feature of landlordism of the period was that the dominant majority of landlords belonged to Hindu community who constituted only 20 per cent of total population of Jammu and Kashmir state and not more than 5 ½ per cent of Kashmir valley. [54] The Dogra rule was ushered in by many retrograde policies. But the most backward step taken by it was the confiscation of proprietary rights in land which the Kashmiri peasantry was enjoying without any interruption since the earliest times. [55] In the new circumstances, to quote A. Wingate, "the government became a farmer, working with coolies under a management closely approximating forced labour." [56] The peasants lost not only the proprietary rights but the occupancy rights also. As mentioned above, it was only the Kashmiri peasant whose proprietary rights in land were confiscated. The new law did not apply to Jammu peasant. He continued to enjoy the proprietary rights in land, [57] obviously because the Dogra rulers always considered Jammu as their home and Kashmir as the conquered territory.

It was at the instance of the strong recommendations made by A. Wingate and his successor settlement officer, Walter Lawrence, that occupancy rights were conferred upon the peasantry in 1894-95. [58] But the peasants of the *jagirs*, *chaks* and *maufis* continued to remain as tenants at will. Thus while the majority of the peasant population working in the lands held as *khalsa* enjoyed occupancy rights on the eve of the foundation of the Muslim Conference, a good number of peasants were no more than farm-labourers. However, the mere conferment of occupancy rights did not satisfy the peasantry as the confiscation of proprietary rights in land was not only regarded as interference in the age old rights of the peasantry, but it was also considered tantamount to denigrating, uprooting and dislodging the peasant population. It also took the hearts of the peasantry out of the cultivation. [59]

Besides this the confiscation of proprietary rights in land was used as a weapon by the state to legitimize its policy of rack renting. Small wonder then that the restoration of the proprietary rights in land figured among the important demands made by the Kashmiri leadership through their memoranda right from the days of nascent signs of consciousness among the Muslims of Kashmir. In this context one may refer to the memoranda presented to the government by the Kashmiri Muslims in 1924 [60] and 1931. [61] It would not be out of place to quote the demand for the restoration of proprietary rights submitted by the Muslims of Kashmir through the memorandum of 1931 to Maharaja Hari Singh in response to a government proclamation: [62]

"*Zamindars* of Kashmir are deprived of proprietary rights over their lands, whereas those of Jammu fully enjoy these rights. The people of Kashmir cannot sell or mortgage their lands on their own will. They cannot even cut the mulberry,

the walnut and the chinar trees grown on their private lands or make use of them nor can they remove dead and fallen timber of such trees, with the result Kashmiri *zamindar* is no better than a mere tenant. There is reason to make a distinction between Kashmir and other parts of the state (Jammu). No government has the right to sell the proprietary rights of the lands belonging to the people. We therefore request your Highness to be the most graciously pleased to restore full proprietary rights of your highness *zamindar* subjects”.

It is important to mention that the restoration of proprietary rights in land was one of the main issues on which the struggle of Muslim Conference centred. And it was owing to its struggle that the demand was exceeded in 1933. [63] However even after 1933, a sizeable peasant population viz. those who were in *jagir*, *chak* and *maufi* lands continued to remain either mere crop shares or tenants. [64] The confiscation of proprietary rights in case of *Marusi* peasants of Kashmir and the creation of new class of tenants at will by the grant of *chaks* and *jagirs* was a sufficient cause of generating deep resentment among the peasant masses. However, the oppressive policy of the government and its collaborators viz. landed aristocracy and the revenue functionaries, angered them beyond any scope for reconciliation. The high pitch of land revenue and other taxes, the faulty method of land revenue assessment and collection, the exaction of illegal taxes (*Rasum*), the beggar and the gross neglect of the basic problems of the peasantry by the state and the landlords were their main grievances.

On the eve of the formation of the Muslim Conference the magnitude of land revenue in case of the *khalsa* land of Kashmir valley was 1/3 of the gross produce; [65] strangely enough it was lighter in Jammu as only ¼ of the total produce was charged as land revenue there. [66] The high pitch of land revenue demand borne by the Kashmiri peasants can be inferred from a complaint submitted by a Mirpur peasant, though he was lightly taxed in comparison to his Kashmiri counterpart. According to him he had to pay Rs 51 for 85 *bighas* situated within the boundaries of Jammu And Kashmir State whereas for the same area of land located within the jurisdiction of Punjab, he had to pay only Rs 10 and 8 *annas*. [67]

Before we enumerate other taxes and the overall impact of the land revenue and other imposts on the peasantry it is important to mention that the land revenue assessment also was not free from grave lacunae as the productivity of land did not only vary from one village to another, but also from one holding and another of the same village, a fact which was prominently highlighted by Walter Lawrence. [68]

The method of revenue collection and mode of payment was also oppressive. It may be remembered that the state realized its share both in cash as well as in kind. While 2/3 of the assessed revenue was paid in cash, 1/3 of it was paid in kind. The rates fixed for paddy and the peasants always suffered for want of currency had to depend upon moneylenders commonly known as *waddars* in Kashmir, who, while exploiting the helplessness of the peasantry, loaned them money on high interest and purchased their grains at very low rates. [69] Thus while on one hand peasant was

exploited by the state by charging exorbitant rates of the revenue, and, on the other hand, he was also fleeced by the *waddar* who charged high interest on the money he lent to the former for payment of land revenue in cash and purchased the peasant's produce at very cheaper rates which deprived the peasant of major part of his produce. The payment of 1/3 of the land revenue in kind known as *Mujawaza* [70] caused much havoc to the peasantry because by snatching away 1/3 of the produce in kind, the peasant was left with a small quantity of produce hardly sufficient to fulfill his basic food needs. It can be properly understood when it is borne in mind that in Kashmir only one crop was raised in a year and that the *per trakh* productivity of land was not more than 2 to 3 *kharwars*.

State as well as the land grantees had their agents in the villages in order to keep a strict watch over the peasantry, particularly during the harvest season to avoid any chances of embezzlement by the famished peasantry. [71] It was because of the over concern of the government to feed the local city population on cheap *shali* that it realized a part of revenue in kind from the docile village population even if a peasant could produce only as much of paddy as could fulfill his bare food necessities and that too just for a few months only. Here it is worth mentioning that not only the incidence of tax was uniform [72] but *Mujawaza* was also imposed on every peasant ignoring the vast disparities in the size of land of one peasant and the other. Given the circumstances it was no wonder to find a Kashmiri peasant shuddering to hear the name of *Mujawaza* and it was also no surprise to see the Kashmiri leadership demanding: [73]

“The department of *shali* (Rice) should be liquidated and the restrictions imposed on the import of food grains from outside the state be removed in order to reduce the burden on peasants who had to pay revenue in the form of *shali* and food rationing in Srinagar be restricted to poor people only.”

Kashtkar (a peasant working on *jagir*, *chak* and *maufi* lands) was worst hit by the system of *GhallaBatai* (crop sharing) - a common method of land revenue assessment and collection in *Jagir*, *Chak* and *Maufi* lands. [74] Unlike the *khalsa* peasants who had to pay 1/3 of the assessed revenue in kind the *kashtkar* had to pay ½ of his produce to his *Maalik* (owner) in terms of grain [75] after paying *trakhi* (two *trakhs* per *kharwar*) of the gross produce towards him. The *kashtkar* had not only to part with half of his grains but even the grass had to be divided equally.

Even 1/3 to say least of 1/2 as land revenue was burdensome for the peasants of Kashmir valley, as unlike the plains there was one crop a year economy in Kashmir and because of the climatic factors the yield of per unit area of land was very less and the crops were frequently damaged by cold waves and the untimely snowfall on the hills of Kashmir. [76] Besides, because of the scarcity of currency and the absence of other sources of income the paddy was the only currency at the disposal of the peasant out of which he met his varied liabilities. He not only purchased his daily requirements by exchanging his paddy produce, but the village servants which in Kashmir were of 36 types were also paid in terms of paddy.

This was not all. The peasants were subjected to a number of other legal and illegal taxes. Apart from the land revenue the peasant had to pay 12 *Annas* of chowkidari [77] and a cess of 6 *paise* per rupee for the repairs of Jamia Masjid. [78] In addition to this, the peasant had to pay *kahchhari* (grazing tax) and tax on walnut trees and all kinds of orchards. [79] Varied kinds of perquisites, commonly known as *Rasum*, were exacted from the peasants. Thus a peasant had not only to part a portion of land produce with different officials but he had also to share his poultry, cattle wealth, blankets, ghee, fodder, wood and timber, and infact almost everything which he produced. [80] Though Walter Lawrence had strongly recommended that urgent steps should be taken against the exaction of *Rasum*, no action seemed to have been taken against in this regard, even when it continued to be a constant complaint of Kashmiri peasantry. It was not only the Kashmiri leadership which highlighted this grievance in the memorandums submitted to the government in 1924 and 1931, but the Galancy Commission also gave a prominent place to this complaint of Kashmiri peasantry in its report:

“Complaints have been received that in every government department such as police, revenue etc. corruption is rampant. A small government servant like forest guard or game watcher lives on the expenses of villagers and exacts bribes by the way of taxes from the villagers in a regularized manner”.

By parting a major portion of produce with the state and the officials after paying both the legal and illegal taxes, the peasant was left with not more than ¼ of his produce. He lived for the most part of the year on rice- gruel, vegetables, wild fruits and other sub-standard kind of diet and sometimes sold his property in lieu of paltry sums and became an easy victim of famines and epidemics. Given the conditions it becomes amply clear as to why the political leaders often sang the following famous revolutionary couplet of Dr. Sheikh Muhammad Iqbal in the public gatherings [81]

*Gis khait say dehkan ko mayasar na ho roozi
Us khait kay har khoshaye gundum ko jalado*

(Burn all crops of the land that does not provide livelihood to its tiller)

These conditions reduced the position of a peasant to a mere food gatherer, who often crossed the difficult mountain passes in search of it somewhere in the plains. The peasant was not only robbed of the major portion of his produce, but he was also subjected to another inhuman exaction called *Beggar* (forced labour). Though the horror of *Gilgit Begar* [82] was no more there after construction of *Gilgit road* and though *Beggar* was partially abolished by the government in 1891 and fully in 1920, it continued unabated in different forms. Because of medieval means of communication, overall technological under -development, the prevalence of feudal expenditure pattern of the state and the consequent meager resources at the disposal of the government, the problem of raising labour power for carriage and construction purposes on nominal wages formed a critical feature of the Dogra Administration, [83] Besides, the

government orders that the remuneration should be paid to the forced labourers applied only to labourers requested for *kar-i-sarkar* (Government work). [84] So far as the exaction of *Beggar* for personal services of the officials was concerned the order made no mention of it. At the same time the position of peasants working on *chak*, *jagir* and *maufi* lands was like those of the serfs. [85] Therefore, the exaction of *Beggar* was an indispensable feature of the *Malik-Kashtkar* relationship. No wonder then that the abolition of *Beggar* was frequently demanded by the Kashmiri Muslims in their memoranda submitted to the government in 1920 century. Even as late as 1932 Galancy Commission found the government order regarding the abolition of *Beggar* a dead letter: [86]

“So far as the beggar is concerned his highness issued orders that adequate payment should be made to those who would be forced to do some labour under government orders. 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 the fact they exact other kinds of unpaid services from them”

It may also be noted that the orders of 1891 and 1920 regarding the abolition of *Beggar* did not apply to the construction of canals, embankments and the like. As a matter of fact till 1947, it was obligatory upon the villagers to construct and repair the canals and embankments besides helping the rulers and high officials in their hunting pursuits and to peddle the boats of the royal river processions without any remuneration. And if any one showed negligence, he was harshly punished and fined. It may also be recorded that though the construction of *Gilgit road* considerably lessened the terror of *Gilgit Beggar*, *Gilgit* menace still haunted the mental peace of many villagers, particularly those living near the road and those who were in possession of horses, mules and asses as they were often forced to carry the loads known as *Ras*. [86] Abdul Ahad Azad has tersely versified the pathetic condition of the peasantry of the period:

*Pakun chum kari-i-begaras
Barun chum genius sarkaras
Yeyam vograi bapari
Ba na zareh ishkeh bemari*

“I cannot escape from *Beggar* and paying revenue in kind. I shall have to face the merchant who would come to recover the debt I owe to him. How I can afford romance?”

Though the peasant was the backbone of the society and a source of strength and prosperity for the country, the government paid no attention towards his basic necessities of life. While different facilities were provided to the city dwellers, the villager was even deprived of primary school facilities. [88]

Labor Unrest:

Next to the peasantry, the biggest segment of the population comprised of the skilled and unskilled laborers coming mainly from the urban centers especially Srinagar exclusively belonging to the Muslim community. Their woeful conditions and the resultant unrest among them find

repeated mention in various sources of the modern history of Kashmir. It was because of several factors. Firstly, the demand of Kashmiri goods in European markets had heavily suffered because of the Franco-German war of 1870 and the economic Depression of 1929. Secondly, the importation of machine made goods had caused severe blow to many indigenous industries throwing a lot of people out of employment and the state showed no interest to preserve the traditional crafts of Kashmir. At the same time, because of the influx of currency and increase in the imports over exports, prices of basic necessities were very high. It is to be remembered that the shawl industry was the leading industry of Kashmir till 1870. It employed about 29115 Muslim shawl weavers besides an innumerable number of spinners. [89] However in spite of being the backbone of Kashmir's economy, the shawl weavers were the worst hit by oppression. They were exorbitantly taxed and like serfs tied to the looms. [90] No wonder, therefore, if a Kashmiri woman wished her neighbor ill she would say may you get a shawl weaver for husband.

The agency of *Dagh -shawl* often became a source of oppression in the hands of its officers. Armed with the authority of rulers, the officials of this department subjected the poor weavers to a great seal of tyranny, which in turn, often led to the forced migration of the shawl weavers to Punjab. And when they succeeded in managing their escape in the face of a strict vigil on the passes leading to plains, [91] the members of their families were not left in peace. No sooner did the weaver give up his job, than the *karkhandar* (cottage industrialist) informed the *Darogah* (superintendent) in order to get his tax decreased. The *Darogaha* then sent a spy to the house of the fugitive. It is said that his wife or father or probably all of them, would be brought before the *Daghshawl*. They were fined a rupee or two or imprisoned for a few days by the authorities whose cruelty and injustice had extorted from them in some cases their almost only means. [92]

The first ever Labor Rising of its kind was organized by the *shawlbafs* in 1865 in the city of Srinagar. The cause behind this rising was the miserable economic condition of the weavers. They were the lowest paid working class and were subjected to inhuman treatment by their employers and the corrupt officials of the *daghshawl*. The immediate cause of the labor rising was an oppressive measure adopted by the contractor of the *daghshawl*, Pandith Rajkak Dhar, who was supposed to recover and pay to the state twelve lakh rupees. [93] The taxation policy of the state was managed in such a way by the employers that its greater burden fell on the weavers. The weavers were to pay 49 rupees each as a contribution towards the sum of the 12 lakh rupees to be paid to the state. An ordinary weaver had, thus, to pay five rupees as tax out of his monthly income which ranged from seven to eight rupees. This intolerable policy forced them to unite and present a petition of their grievances to the governor. On 29th April 1865, the shawl-weavers marched in procession, towards Zaldagar, Srinagar. The processionists uttered slogans expressing their demands. They also burnt the effigy of Raj kak Dhar. They were ordered to disperse, but they refused. Troops were then sent under the command of Colonel Bajay Singh to crush the procession. They pounced on the unarmed and unguarded labourers and

charged them with guns and spears. After some labourers died, the procession ran towards the bridge of Hajji Rather and most of them fell into the marshy canal and got drowned. Hundreds of workers suffered minor and major injuries and at the end 28 dead bodies were returned to the people by the army. [94]

The agitation was suppressed ruthlessly. Its prominent leaders namely Sheikh Rasool, Abli baba, Qudlala and Sona Shah were arrested and brought to the shergarhi palace and beaten mercilessly and strapped. They were thrown in a dungeon. Sheikh Rasool and Abli Baba died of these atrocities. A heavy fine of Rs 50,000 each was imposed on all the four leaders and when it came to light that they were poor, it was proposed to be reduced to Rs 25,000, but the Maharaja did not agree to this remission for he wanted to make it a test case and an example for his subjects. [95] The other two leaders were sent to Jammu to be imprisoned in Bahu Fort. In addition to it, hundreds of agitators were arrested and put in prison in Habak. Most of them died of cold and starvation. [96]

After 1870, the economic condition of the shawl weavers worsened beyond recovery. The fact is that out of the total quantum of exports of Kashmiri shawls France purchased 80 per cent. However, when the Franco-German war of 1870 led to the economic bankruptcy of France, Kashmiri shawl almost lost its market. Thus the majority of the *shawlbafs* were thrown out of employment. Some of them went to plains to become daily labourers, some took up agriculture and some opted for lesser income crafts. [97] Those who continued their traditional profession had to be content with very meager wages as a corollary of demand supply relationship. The government took no steps to maintain the world famous shawl industry of Kashmir by exploring new markets once the French market was closed to it. This was the main grievance of the Kashmiri craftsmen and the intelligentsia against the rulers. According to PremNathBazaz: [98]

“The government of Kashmir tells us that the Franco-German war of 1870 gave fatal blow to the shawl trade in the west from which it could not revive. But this is no defence when we know that such blows had been dealt upon the industry prior to 1870. If the market in the west was lost temporarily a government could create new market elsewhere. But this could be achieved only if the government were sympathetic and wide awake”.

Sheikh Muhammad Abdullaha, one of the founder members of Muslim Conference and the one belonging to a *karkhandar* family, gives heart rending details about the destitute condition of the *shawlbaffs* and *rafugers* (embroiders) owing to the downfall of shawl industry after 1870: [99]

“A boy living in my neighbourhood Abdul Ahad by name worked with me in an embroidery center installed in our house. He was attractive, good looking and also highly civilized and etiquette-loving in spite of his poverty. He remained away from the centre perhaps on account of illness as reported, but I soon learnt that he was dead. When I went to his home to console his parents a horrifying story was revealed to me. His family had been running into debt of

a usurer, who had continuously been asking for clearing the debt. He also insulted them in the bargain. My sensitive friend could not bear this. Hence he would save money for clearing debts on the pain of starvation. He would somehow manage to feed his two younger sisters but himself remained feeding on chaff. This broke down his health and resulted in his consumption to death”.

After the confiscation of property rights and the maximization of revenues in land, the next step taken by Maharaja Gulab Singh was to fall upon the savings of artisan especially the shawl-weavers. [100] He had imposed heavy taxes on this industry and levied other duties such as a pool tax of Rs 47 per annum on each shawl weaver. In order to ensure a constant flow he did not allow a worker, whether half blind or full blind, leave his loom without a substitute. He also charged an *advolerm* duty of 25 per cent on each shawl. Besides his officials charged their illegal exactions which also amounted to 25 per cent of the cost. As mentioned earlier, in the face of such oppression the workers preferred to flee from the valley. [101] Gulab Singh imposed tax on every shop at Rs 120 per annum for old shops and Rs 60 per annum for new shops. [102] It was in 1897 that the owners of the shawl factories as well as other workers were highly agitated and presented their grievances before George Taylor. The rack renting policy of the state as well as corrupt attitude of the authorities had turned the condition of the shawl weavers deplorable.

The discontentment of a big and vocal class of shawl-weavers, majority of whom were city dwellers, provided a fertile ground to those few sensitive souls who had realized that for inaugurating a new and just era there was no alternative but to launch a sustained struggle against the Dogra rule. Kashmiri freedom fighters and their Indian supporters voiced the downfall of the Kashmiri handicrafts and the resultant pathetic condition of the artisan class. German Das, a famous Indian nationalist, expressed his grief in these words: [103]

“During the past times Kashmir was famous in India and abroad for its arts and crafts, its shawl and pashmina. Now the position is reverse and the cloth from foreign lands is imported, thus resulting in the economic devastation of the villages which were the centres of arts and crafts”.

The ruination of traditional Kashmiri crafts not only evoked the sympathy of the Indian nationalists but the Indian press also voiced its concern in this regard. The deplorable condition of the artisan class and the indifferent attitude of the rulers became one of the main issues debated in the annual sessions of the Muslim conference. In his presidential address to the second annual session of the Muslim Conference Sheikh Muhammad Abdulla observed: [104]

“From times immemorial Kashmir was known for its arts and crafts and the Kashmiri artisans were famous throughout the world for their skill. The European kings and nobles were fond of Kashmiri crafts. But the downfall of market and disorganization of Kashmiri artisans gave a fatal blow to the arts and crafts of Kashmir. The lack of government patronage added to the devastation and

ruination of Kashmiri crafts. No doubt, the government has established an industries department, but if this department will be asked what it has contributed towards the welfare of craftsmen like shawl weavers, carpet weavers, goldsmith, carpenters, blacksmiths, paper-makers and other artisans and the development of these industries, the answer would be totally negative.”

Silk industry was probably the only industry which maintained its flourishing condition throughout the period. It was a government undertaking which provided livelihood to thousands of people. The Srinagar Silk Factory alone employed 5000 workers. All these workers, it is to be noted, were Muslims and almost all the officials of the silk industry belonged to non-Muslim community. In the famous memorandum of 1924, submitted by the prominent Kashmiri Muslims to Lord Reading, the problems of the Muslim labour of silk industry were also highlighted. It also prayed for the appointment of Muslims on higher positions in silk industry. In 1924, the labourers of this factory were paid daily wage of 4 ½ *annas* per head which was obviously too inadequate especially in view of the rising cost of living and the huge profit it earned. [105] The corruption was so rampant that the Kashmiri Pandith officials shamelessly pocketed even a part of their wages. The workers of the factory had constantly been complaining against the insufficiency of wages, the corruption of the officials and the tyranny of the inspecting staff. The contention of these labourers was that in addition to their low wages, they were insulted by the officials who demanded bribes from them. [106] On the persistent demand from the labourers an enquiry was at last instituted. The allegations of corruption were found to be true, but instead of taking action against the guilty they were mutually transferred from one block of the factory to another. [107] It happened because the administration was entirely manned by the Pandiths who unfortunately considered it a part of their duty to protect each other. [108] The failure of the government to punish the guilty officials especially when the allegations had been proved true created a lot of resentment among the workers against the bureaucrats. The government, in order to suppress the popular resentment of the workers, arrested some of their ringleaders. This happened in July 1924. In order to register their protest and make a demonstration of their solidarity with their imprisoned comrades the entire labour force marched in a procession, joined by their women and children. The processionists were entirely peaceful and were raising slogans demanding the release of their leaders, the punishment of corrupt officials and a reasonable increase in their wages.

Hari Singh, who was the commander-in-chief, rushed with a large force of cavalry and without any advance warning to disperse, ordered his troops, armed with fixed bayonets, to charge the strikers. Scores of people including women and children were trampled under and scores more were wounded by the blood thirsty soldiers. [109] Almost the entire Muslim sector of the city went without meals that evening because of depth of feelings and sorrow. Though the labourers were able to gain an increase of six *paise* per day in their wages but dozens of their leaders were tried and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. [110]

The state policy of patronizing non-local industrialists and contractors caused a deep resentment among the Kashmiri labour class, as these non-local industrialists and contractors preferred to employ non-local labourers. It is strange that not only carpenters and masons but more often than not even unskilled labourers were imported from outside, though Kashmir had a superfluous labour force that for want of work in Kashmir used to leave for plains each year in search of livelihood. Sheikh Muhammad Abdullaha voiced this grievance of Kashmiri labour class in the second annual session of Muslim Conference: "The labour class complaints of nepotism practiced by the officers of public works department. The department engages labour from outside the state ignoring the labour and manpower available in the villages." [111] It forced the labour class to starve.

Education and Awakening:

We had come to know England through her glorious literature, which had brought new inspiration into our young lives. The English authors whose books and poems we studied were full of love for humanity, justice and freedom. This great literary tradition had come down to us from the revolutionary period. All this fired our youthful imaginations
Rabindranath Tagore

Until the beginning of the 20th century one does not find even a single Muslim boy in the Christian missionary schools. [112] For political reasons the government also for a long time did not show any interest in disseminating modern education among the Muslims. To quote PremNathBazaz: [113]

"The awareness that they (Dogras) were Hindus and the overwhelming majority of the Kashmir professed Islam, constantly made them apprehensive. They disliked the idea of making their subjects politically conscious and thought that imparting of education was only an effective way of awakening the people to their political and human rights".

Funding a few *Madrasas* and *Maktabas* was the only interest shown by the Dogra rulers till the late seventies of the 19th century. The establishment of British Residency in Kashmir in 1885 was a boon for Kashmir in general and Muslims in particular. It was after 1885 that the government showed some interest towards educating masses when some primary and middle schools were opened in different parts of the valley. However, even in 1891 there were only 18 schools in Kashmir out of which 17 were primary schools and one was a middle school. Out of 18 schools, 10 were situated in Srinagar and the rest in other towns of the valley. [114] Realizing the baneful impact of the educational backwardness of the Kashmiri Muslims, their sympathizers in India persuaded the Maharajas to pay attention towards the educational aspirations of the Muslim Community of Kashmir. [115] With the result, the Government opened some more schools and offered some financial assistance in the form of scholarships for attracting the Muslims towards modern education. On account of opening up of schools in different parts of the valley and providing them some financial help, there was some response from the Muslims towards modern education.

If not immediately but definitely from the beginning of the 20th century, the Kashmiri Muslims started realizing the background and consequences of the apathy of Dogra rulers towards educating the Muslim masses. It was fully realized that the government shirks its responsibility simply because of political considerations apprehending that education would make them (the Muslims) conscious about their rights as citizens. [116] The prominent Kashmiri Muslims pleaded for providing educational facilities to the Muslims and devising ways and means for encouraging them towards education; however, when all the pleas and petitions of Muslims went unheeded, they sought the support of their co-religionist sympathizers of British India especially those of the Punjab to exercise their influence for persuading the Maharaja to accede to this genuine demand of Kashmiri Muslims. As a result the All India Muslim Educational Conference sent a deputation headed by Sahibzada Aftab Ahmad Khan to Kashmir in 1913. This deputation presented a memorandum to the Maharaja requesting him to take care of the educational aspirations of the Muslim community. [117] It was in response to the persuasion by the Indian Muslims that the government instituted an office known as Special Inspector for Muhammadan Education and appointed an Education Commission in May 1916, under the chairmanship of Mr. Sharp. [118]

However, most of the recommendations of the Sharp Commission were not implemented at all. For example, it had recommended that the villages with a population of 500 should be provided with a primary school, but the government turned a deaf ear to it, though this recommendation was upheld by other commissions appointed by the government from time to time to recommend ways and means to improve the lot of the people, particularly that of the Muslim community. In fact, the Muslims were not at all happy with the response of the government to the Sharp Commission report. They expressed their dissatisfaction time and again. In the draft of demands presented by the Kashmiri Muslims to Maharaja Hari Singh on 19 October 1931, the Muslim leadership complained:

"The Muslims of Kashmir are deplorably backward in education. Unfortunately, Mr. Sharp's report, which would have benefited us, is not acted upon".

It may be noted that the predominant population of the Muslim community lived in villages and the predominant portion of the Hindu community were urban dwellers. [119] Therefore, the negligence of the government with regard to the establishment of even primary schools in about 80 per cent of the total villages of Kashmir was more disadvantageous to the Muslim community. It may be noted that out of 3579 villages of Kashmir, only 618 villages had elementary educational facilities. [120] Not satisfied with the government attitude, the Muslims of Kashmir pleaded for taking some necessary steps to disseminate education among the Muslims. In their memorandum submitted by the prominent Kashmiri Muslims to Lord Reading, it was prayed: [121]

"A Muslim or a European expert on education be appointed to look after Muslim education. Compulsory free education

be introduced and the same be initiated from Srinagar city. Muslims be recruited both as teachers and inspectors in greater number and sufficient number of scholarships be made available to them for higher education in India and abroad”.

Though on paper the government had earmarked some amount of money for the grant of scholarships to the Muslim Community, however this too was not actually spent. Even the official figures show considerable variation between sanctioned and expended amount. [122] For encouraging higher education the government had the provision of granting scholarships to those students who were interested in doing post-graduation in science subjects. But to quote Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, “These scholarships were generally awarded to non-Muslim students.” It may be noted that the Sheikh himself had made persistent requests for the grant of this scholarships, but all in vein. [123] For going abroad for further studies the government had fixed the age limit of the aspirant candidates at 24 years. But this was a deliberate policy to eliminate the Muslim students from the race for going for higher studies as the Muslim students, because of their poor educational background, usually started their education very late. The fact that the Muslims understood the logic behind fixing this age limit is clear from the following statement of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah, the then budding leader of the community: [124]

“I was the first Muslim to get M.Sc degree. After returning to Kashmir I applied for going abroad to receive higher education for entertaining such applications the government had fixed 24 years as the age limit. Since I had already crossed this limit my application was rejected. The government had fixed this age limit under a plan. Its main purpose was to keep the Muslims away from the opportunity of receiving higher education. Generally, these people were not in a position to attend such institutions and if any one desired to go abroad, the age bar acted as a stumbling block in his way. Thus the government betrayed the Muslim candidates and made backdoor entries of privileged candidates. After my constant failure, I reached the conclusion that to expect justice from the prevailing system was only an illusion”

Instead of getting sensitive about the educational grievances of the Muslim community, the government further offended the Muslims by its policy of sidelining the “Special Inspector for Muhammandan Education,” which was created prior to the appointment of the Sharp Commission in response to the strong Muslim agitation both inside and outside the state. In this regard the Galancy Commission report records: [125]

“It appears that for the last eleven years this official has been deflected from his proper work and has been deputed to discharge the general duties of an ordinary assistant inspector in one particular division”.

In 1910 the official records of total number of Muslim literates was 4760. [126] But the majority of them were either simple literates meaning knowing, reading and writing an ordinary letter or literates in traditional learning or simply possessing elementary education imparted in

primary schools. However, it was with the beginning of the 20th century that one find an increasing number of Muslim literates owing to the expansion of schools. It were also sizeable number of middle pass and matriculate Muslim students. Some of whom went for higher studies.

In the twenties of the 20th century the number of the Muslim students in educational institutions rose to become equal to, if not greater than, non- Muslims. Of course their number was less in the colleges. But an interesting feature of the education of Muslim community was that many of them, in imitation to Hindu boys, went outside for obtaining higher academic degrees from different universities of British India. And it was these young educated Muslims who became the harbingers of political consciousness in Kashmir. [127] A sizeable number of Muslim literates in Kashmir, who were mostly middle pass and matriculates, acted as active workers of the new leadership as in comparison to illiterate masses they could understand the message dinned into their ears.

The modern education made the Muslim youth conscious about their rights and power they possessed to change the character of the government with the support of the oppressed masses. The great seats of learning (Indian universities) from which they obtained their degrees educated them about practical politics, as these institutions were also the hubs of political activities. Moreover, the Indian situation which was experiencing a tremendous wave of patriotism and high sense of sacrifice among its citizens for freedom fired the imagination of the Kashmiri Muslim youth for liberating their land, which was under the subjection of more tyrannous rule than that of the British India. Writing about the impact of the Indian Nationalism on Muslim educated youth who received education from different Indian Universities, the contemporary freedom fighter and historian Prem Nath Bazaz remarks:

“The glorious chapter in the history of the national movement of India could not but produce profound effect on the minds of the Kashmiri Muslim young men, who were studying in different universities and had therefore the opportunity to witness the various phases of the movement with their own eyes. Some of them participated in the Muslim League session at Allahabad in 1930 where for the first time Dr. Muhammad Iqbal adumbrated his theory of pan-Islamism and a separate state for the Muslims of the subcontinent in his presidential address”.

It is interesting to note that even those Kashmiri Muslim students who had gone to India for receiving higher religious education also returned as firebrand patriots obviously because none of the educational institutions of [128] India, wheather secular or religious, could remain uninfluenced by the tempestuous wave of nationalism that had hardly left anybody unmoved. Writing about Mirwaiz Muhammad Yousuf Shah who returned to Kashmir in 1931 after receiving education from *Dar-Ul-Uloom Deoband* and gave his whole-hearted support to nascent political consciousness of Kashmiri Muslims, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah remarks: [129]

“It was during these times that late Mirwaiz Muhammad Yousuf Shah returned from deoband after the completion of

his education and he too had been influenced by modern ideas and thinking. He had also been influenced by some outstanding ulema (theologians) of Deoband and the spirit of the khilafat movement of India”

It may be emphasized that after returning from Indian Universities, the main grievance of the Muslim educated youth against the government was its denial to provide them suitable jobs. [130] The worst hit of the prevailing system was none other than

Sheikh Muhammad Abdullaha, an outstanding leader of the Kashmir freedom movement. As mentioned in the preceding pages that after obtaining the degree of M. Sc. from the Aligarh Muslim University he was simply appointed as a school teacher, whereas only a decade earlier the Deputy Commissioner of Mirpur, namely Makhan, was totally illiterate. [131] Thus imbued by the modern ideas, trained through exposure to plains, influenced with the Indian national movement and fed up with the prevailing system, these young men started the Reading Room at Fateh Kadal, Srinagar where they used to discuss the problems created by the autocratic regime. It was this Reading Room party which ultimately blazed the trail for freedom in Kashmir.

2. Conclusion

The period was marked by expression of discontent against misrule and oppression. The most crucial consequence that followed the Treaty of Amritsar was that it caused devastating effects upon the Kashmiri common masses. Taking advantage of the so called Sale –Deed of Kashmir, the Dogra Maharajas considered Kashmir as their purchased property.

Kashmir could not remain aloof from the influence of Indian National movement. The different movements in British India had a profound impact on the minds of Kashmiri students studying in different universities of British India. They were influenced by the ideas of civil liberty equality and democracy that characterized the Indian National movement. Back at home they initiated a movement against feudal domination. They used the grievances of miniscule middle class and peasantry for furthering their interests. Their efforts culminated in the formation of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference in 1932. Other factors responsible for the emergence of political consciousness were agrarian crisis, labor unrest, education and awakening and role of socio religious reform movements in Kashmir.

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- [20] Bates, *Gazetters of kashmir*, p. 102, Galancy commission Report Vide *Dastawaziat*, p.154.
- [21] Memorandum submitted by the Muslim Representatives to Maharaja Hari Singh on October 19, 1931.
- [22] Galancy commission report vide *Dastawazait*, pp.89-90
- [23] Robert Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernment*, p.38.
- [24] The abrogation of this law was one of the foremost demands of the Kashmiri muslim leadership. see Galancy Commission Report, Vide, *Datawazait*, pp. 92-93, Prem Nath Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in kashmir*, pp.143-144.
- [25] Memorandum submitted by the Muslim representatives to Maharaja Hari Singh on October 19, 1931.
- [26] Bazaz, Prem Nath, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, pp.137-138, Sheikh Muhammad Abdullaha, *Atish-i-chinar*, pp 34-35.
- [27] Memorandum submitted by the Muslim representatives to Maharaja Hari Singh on October 19, 1931.
- [28] Young husband, *Kashmir*, p. 186.
- [29] Bazaz, PremNath, *Inside Kashmir*, p. 83.
- [30] Bates, *Gazetter of kashmir*, p.29.
- [31] Sheikh Muhammd Abdullaha, *Atish-i-Chinar*, p.34.
- [32] Ibid, p.20
- [33] Young husband, *kashmir*, pp .184-185.
- [34] NAI, Foreign Department, Secret F.No.726-E, April,1924.
- [35] Prem Nath Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, pp. 203-204.
- [36] Galancy commission report vide *Dastawaziat*, pp.110-111
- [37] The government justified the poor representation of the Muslims in state services on account of their backwardness in modern education. But the Kashmiri Muslims complained that to keep them away from the state services was a part of the policy of Governance. Sheikh MuhammadAdullaha, *Atish-i-chinar*, pp.47-48.
- [38] *Riots Enquiry Committee Report*, p.87

- [39] Galancy Commission Report vide *Dastawaziat*, p.111
- [40] Sheikh Muhammad, *Atish-i-Chinar*, pp. 19-20.
- [41] Ibid, p.65.
- [42] Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom*, Vol, I, p. 298.
- [43] For example the government granted scholarships to those students who used to go for higher education outside the state. But these scholarships were often bestowed upon the non- muslims students. For details see Sheikh Muhammad Abdullaha, *Atish-i-chinar*, pp.19-20
- [44] Ibid. pp 49-53.
- [45] Ibid, pp. 22.
- [46] It is pertinent to mention that in the context of the agrarian history of Kashmir zamindar is not the landlord but peasant.
- [47] Next to maharaja the class of people who appropriated a considerable portion of the revenues of the valley were the *Jagirdars*. The whole village or a portion there of whose revenues were assigned to a particular individual for various reasons was known as *asjagir* and the assignee was called *jagirdar*, the *jagirdars* can be classified into four categories; (A) those given purely as a favour.(B) those given as a reward for services rendered to the state and (C) those granted for political reasons. There were both small as well as big *jagirdars* and they too were infrequently the proprietors of the land. JKA,F. NO.117 Of 1896, Note on A. R. of the minor *Jagirs* of kashmir.
- [48] The year 1862 witnessed the creation of a novel agrarian institution in kashmir which led to the emergence of a new class of landed aristocracy. It was called *chak* and the assignee of such grant was known as *chakdar*. The creation of this institution was motivated by two objectives viz. to bring the fallow land of the valley under cultivation and to reinforce a class of favourites. For details see A. Wingate report: JKA, File NO.76 of 1896.
- [49] The rent free land grant given either for the life time in perpetuity to religious classes, religious institutions and others was known as *maufi* or Dharmarth and the grantee was called *maufidar*. For details see, JKA, File NO.150 of 1895, File NO.96/G-4 of 1897, File No.16/H-7 of 1902, *Ain-i-hararth*, pp. 1-5.
- [50] JKA, File NO.191/H-751 OF 1918.
- [51] JKA File NO.117 OF 1896.
- [52] Josef Korbil, *Danger in kashmir*, p.16
- [53] Bazaz, PremNath, *Inside kashmir*, p. 230.
- [54] Lawrence, *valley of kashmir*, p.414.
- [55] For the proprietary rights enjoyed by the Kashmiri peasantry during medieval times. M. A. Wani, *Some Aspects of the Socio-Economic and Cultural Life of the People of Kashmir Under Sultans*, (unpublished phd thesis), post graduate Department of History, University of Kashmir, pp.294-297.
- [56] A. Wigate, *Report*, p.56.
- [57] Galancy commission Report vide *Dastawaziat*, p.123:, in this context it is pertinent to quote the observations of a contemporary politician and historian ,PremNathBazaz,“they (Dogras) established a sort of Dogra imperialism in the state in which the Dogras were elevated to the position of the masters and all non Dogra communities and classes were given the humble place of inferiors.” PremNathBazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in kashmir*, p.27
- [58] JKA, File No.27/H-34 OF 1896, File NO:H/75 OF 1896.A.R.of jammu and kashmir state, 1895-96, pp.127-134.
- [59] Though Galancy Commission was not infavour of conferring proprietary rights upon the peasantry, it made no boons in accepting the fact that “it is said that if the peasants are given proprietary rights in land , it will instill a sence of confidence and dignity in them and this will help in cultivating among them the love for the land they have been working on. This way they will properly realize the significance and advantages of their labour. Doubtless there is a great substance in this argument.” Galancy commission report vide *Dastawaziat* pp.122-124.
- [60] JKA, General Department, FileNO.524/F/62 Of 1924.
- [61] Memorandum submitted by the Muslim representatives to Maharaja Hari Singh on October 19, 1931.
- [62] Ibid. It was under the pressure of the historical incident of 13 july 1931, where in about 21 kashmiri muslims laid down their lives outside the central jail, Srinagar that Maharaja Hari Singh issued a proclamation in which all the communities of the state were asked to submit their demands in a written form .Thus the memorandums submitted by different communities to his highness Maharaja Hari Singh were presented before the Galancy commission for evaluation as well as recommendation purposes.
- [63] Presidential address delivered by sheikh Muhammad Abdullaha to the second annual session of Muslim Conference on Dec.17, 1933 at Mirpur vide *Dastawaziat*, p.200
- [64] It was in 1933 that proprietary rights were conferred upon the peasantry in khalsa lands as a result of the struggle of Muslim conference. But the peasantry working on *jagir* and *chak* continued to remain either mere crop sharers or tenants at will as late as 1950. It is to be recorded that even in 1950 the orchard and *maufi* lands were exempted from the land reforms introduced by the nationalist government. Sheikh Abdullaha, *Atish-i-chinar*, pp. 493-494
- [65] Presidential address delivered by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah to the second annual session of Muslim Conference vide *Dastawaziat*, pp.301-302.
- [66] Mirza ShafiqHussain, *Dastawazizait*, p.195
- [67] Prsidential address delivered by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah to the sixth annual session of Muslim Conference on March 27, 1938 vide *Dastawaziat*, p.463.
- [68] Lawrence, *The valley of kashmir*, pp.435-436.
- [69] Galancy commission Report(1932) vide *Dastawaziat*, pp.137-138.
- [70] Galancy Commission Report vide *Dastawazizait*, p.129
- [71] *The valley of kashmir*, pp.402-403. In case of privileged landholders the village headmen were commonly the men of their choice. MirzaAfzal beg, *Agricultural Reforms In Kashmir*, p.10
- [72] Presidential address delivered by sheikh Muhammad Abdullaha to the sixth annual session of Muslim

- Conference on march 27, 1938, vide *Dastawazait*, pp.462-463.
- [73] Memorandum submitted by the prominent muslims of Srinagar to Lord Reading, the Governor General of India, on his visit to the valley in 1924.
- [74] The system of *GhallaBatai* continued unabated in *jagir, chak* and *maufilands*. The system was however discouraged since 1932 onwards. Galancy commission Report vide *Dastawazait*, p.135.
- [75] Agricultural Reforms in Kashmir, p.32
- [76] M. A. wani, Hill Agrarian Economy of Medieval India: A Case Study of Kashmir, an article presented in indian history, Dharwad session of 1988.
- [77] Galancy commission Report (1932) vide *Dastawazait*, p.155.
- [78] Memorandum submitted by the prominent Muslims of Srinagar to Lord Reading, the Governor General of India, on his visit to the valley in 1924.
- [79] Galancy Commission Report (1932) vide *Dastawazait*, pp.125 and 132.
- [80] Walter Lawrence, The Valley of Kashmir, p.415, *Dastawazait*, pp.140-141.
- [81] Sheikh Abdullaha *Atish-i-Chinar*, p.490
- [82] Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, p.413, E. F. Knight, *where Three Empires Meet*. pp. 67-68.
- [83] Ibid, pp. 413-414.
- [84] As late as 1932, Galancy Commission found the order about the abolition of *Beggar* as a dead letter and laid a stress on its proper implementation. See *Dastawazait*, pp.141-142.
- [85] To quote Prem Nath Bazaz, I shuddered when I heard the condition of the people living in the jagirs. The depredations of the *jagirdars* are monstrous. There is no law but the will of the *jagirdars* in these parts of the state. I was told that people may not marry even their daughters against the wishes of the *jagirdars*. *Inside Kashmir*, p.232.
- [86] Galancy Commission Report, vide *Dastawazait*, pp.140-141.
- [87] Galancy Commission Report (1932) vide *Dastawazait*, p.142.
- [88] Galancy Commission Report vide *Dastawazait*, pp. 98-99.
- [89] Bates, *Gazetter of Kashmir*, p.30.
- [90] Robert, Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernment*, pp.42-43.
- [91] Robert, Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernment*, p.68. A good many people of kashmir are said to have attempted to escape to the punjab during the famine of 1878-79, but at the barriers troops were stationed to prevent the migration of the people and harrowing tales are told of the fathers of families getting past the barrier by bribing guardians of the passes. While the wives and children were felt to die in kashmir. *The valley of kashmir*, p.215. The system under which no person could leave the valley without permission was known as *Rahadari*.
- [92] Robert Thorp, p.24.
- [93] Prithvi Nath Koul Bamzai, *A History of Kashmir*, p.668.
- [94] Nab, Shah, *Wajeez-Ut-Tawarikh*, vide Ghlum Hassan khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir*, 1931-1940, p.79
- [95] JKA, File No.306 of 1922, P.57.
- [96] JKA, File No.313-E of 1865.
- [97] Lawrence, *Valley of Kashmir*, p.375.
- [98] Bazaz, PremNath, *Inside Kashmir*, pp78.
- [99] Sheikh Muhammad Abdullaha, *Atish-i-Chinar*, pp. 24-25.
- [100] **JKA, File No.835.**
- [101] John Irwin, *Shawls*, p.9
- [102] K. M. Pannikar, *Gulab Singh 1792-1885- Founder of Kashmir*, p.139.
- [103] Statements of German Dass vide *Pratab*, Lahore, Feb.27, 1929.
- [104] Presidential address delivered by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullaha to the second annual session of Muslim Conference at Mirpur, on December 17, 1933 vide *Dastawazait*, p.304.
- [105] Muhammad Yusuf Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom*, vol, I, pp .333-334.
- [106] Riots Enquiry Committee Report, July 1931
- [107] JKA, A.R Of 1981 (Samavat), p.9
- [108] Ibid.
- [109] JKA, A. R, of 1981 (Samavat), p.9
- [110] Ibid.
- [111] Presidential address delivered by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullaha to the Second Annual Session of Muslim Conference at Mirpur, December 17, 1933 vide *Dastawazait*, p.303.
- [112] Tyndale Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, p .265
- [113] *Daughters of the vitasta*, p. 215
- [114] JKA, *Annual Administrative report*, 1891-92.
- [115] *Riots Enquiry Committee Report*, July 1931, JKA, File No.217/f-9 of 1913
- [116] *Daughters of Vitasta*, p.215
- [117] JKA, File No.217/F-9 of 1913.
- [118] It was a result of the persuasion of the prominent Muslims within and outside the education commissioner of India, to suggest ways and means of providing educational facilities for the Muslims of Kashmir. Mr. Sharp made a thorough enquiry into the grievances of the Muslims and after examining their demands submitted a report. NAI, Foreign political establishment, august 1916, NO.167-68, Part-b
- [119] Out of 1000, population of the Hindu community 555 lived in city and towns, whereas the number of Muslim urban dwellers was not more than 120 per thousand .Census of India 1921, I, p .48.
- [120] It may be noted that out of 3579 villages of Kashmir there were 2961 villages which had a population of 500 and below and till the end of our period of study even those villages which possessed 500 population did not have even a primary school though the same was recommended by the education commissions appointed by the government from time to time to improve the system of education in kashmir. See Galancy Commission Report vide *Dastawazait*, p.99, Recommendations of the Educational Reorganization Committee, 1938.
- [121] Memorandum submitted to Lord Reading by the prominent Muslims of Srinagar in 1924.
- [122] The following information pertaining to the allocation and expenditure of muslim scholarships has been taken from the Galancy Commission Report 1932, vide *Dastawazait*, p.103

Year Budget Amount Actually Spent

1927-28 Rs, 2,100 Rs 1103

1928-29 Rs 4,200 Rs 4,072

1929-30 Rs 7,200 Rs 6,484

1930-31 Rs 19,400 Rs 16,321

- [123] Sheikh Muhammad *Abdulaha*, *Atish-i-chinar*, p. 20
- [124] *Ibid*, pp.21-22
- [125] Galancy Commission Report vide *Dastawazait*, p.108
- [126] Census Of India, 1921, I,p.111
- [127] Bazaz, PremNath, *The History of the Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, p.147.
- [129] Sheikh Muhammad Abdullaha, *Aatish-i-Chinar*, p.71
- [130] *Ibid*, pp. 47-48.
- [131] Muhammad YousufSaraf, *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom*, Vol .i, p .298.