

Role of State in the Development of Female Education in Kashmir after 1947

Dr. Tariq Ahmad Sheikh

Assistant Professor
School of Arts and Humanities
Lovely Professional University,
Phagwara, Punjab, India
tariq.21368@lpu.co.in

Shoaib Mohammad

Research Scholar
School of Arts and Humanities
Lovely Professional University,
Phagwara, Punjab, India
shoaib.11720106@lpu.in

Abstract

The present paper attempts to analyze the role of the state in the development of female education in Kashmir within the initial years of post-independent India. As after 1947 initiatives were taken to enhance the condition of people of the state particularly the women, but the vital changes in female literacy occurred due to the steps taken by the government both at state and national level. The researcher will try to explore the initiatives taken by government particularly at the state level. The present endeavor is also aimed at analyzing the varied kinds of educational challenges that women faced both socially and politically.

Key Words: Kashmir, Women education, State government, post Independence, Female literacy, Naya Kashmir, quality education, genderequality

Introduction

Education has always been a great source of empowerment for disadvantaged sections of the society and in case of women; education had been of immense priority. But unfortunately as per Census 2011, female literacy in India was only 65.46% (male literacy is 82.14%). Today female education may be widely advocated as a fundamental right, a matter of social justice and equality, but in contrary it is still regarded as ‘consumption’ and welfare expenditure, if not as a burden¹. The state of Jammu & Kashmir, which is located in northern side of Indian subcontinent, has unique topography, people and culture. It is important to note that after 1947 the state has been at the helm of political disturbance between India and Pakistan. The ongoing dispute since last seven decades diluted the development motives of state. Before 1947 despite some developments and initiatives taken in the field of female education, the female literacy had remained at low ebb which had continued even after 1947. In recent times as per 2011 the overall literacy of the state stands at 68.74%. The male literacy stands at 78.26 and only 58.01% are female literates. There is wide gap of 20.25% between male and female literacy².

This research utilizes some key sources to analyze the theme, it refers to sources e.g. C.E Tyndale Biscoe’s book “*Kashmir Sunlight and Shade*” the book has a chapter on education

¹ Gayathri, R. (2014) ‘*Silent Voices: Women Perceptions about Self and Education in Late Nineteenth century India*’, in P. V. Rao. (Ed). *New Perspective in the History of Indian Education*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, p.90

² Census of India, (2011). State of Literacy, Chapter 6, Part Jammu & Kashmir, pp.114-117
Retrieved https://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/data_files/india/Final_PPT_2011_chapter6.pdf

that gives us clear overview of the period and insight in the phenomenon of education in the valley of Kashmir in pre-independence period. The research also refers to the document “*Naya Kashmir or New Kashmir*” which was the party manifesto of Sheikh Muhammad Abdulla. The Manifesto of ‘Naya Kashmir’ plays important role as it was the road map for future governments to build the modern and new Kashmir after independence in 1947; the document also pays special emphasis over the enlightenment of women. Some other important sources are also referred e.g. “*History and Growth of Education in Jammu & Kashmir 1872-1973*” by **SL Seru** and the “*Multi Dimensional Problems of Women in Kashmir*” by **B.A Dabla**. The researcher also utilizes information taken from educational reports, files and old census data to analyze the theme.

Prior to 1947 the Kashmiri women got stuck between a conservative society and the ruling class (Dogras) who took their education and empowerment as a lighter stuff. Their significance in society used to be a mere identity of ignorance and dormancy. The stigmas like bigotry and gender biasness choked the society to educate them. Though their education was confined to theology and reciting the religious gospels so the formal education remained as a mere dream. The educational consciousness in society was languishing therefore women could not get a window for the expression of their creative energy. Though the efforts and role of private agencies like Christian Missionaries cannot be ruled out as they have lead the initial foundation of modern education in Kashmir in pre independence era. But in case of female education as Tyndale Biscoe penned in ‘*Kashmir Sunlight and Shade*’ that ‘the education of girls was lagging far behind than that of boys and it was somewhere in late nineties that a first ever initiative was taken by one of the Christian Missionary ladies when a school for girls was established in the city premises, which was not so popular as it shocked the prejudices of all proper-thinking folk in Srinagar³. It was hard for the missionary society to educate them as they faced severe setbacks from state and society. The government on the other side had no definite policy of education neither had proper initiatives throughout the period, except in 1939 after realizing the need for orientation and reorganization of education system. In such regard an appointment was fixed with last Dogra ruler Maharaja Hari Singh to discuss the problems of education system. The committee was setup under the chairmanship of Director of education for the evaluation and appraisal of the then system of primary and secondary education. The subsequent recommendations and suggestions of the committee demanded to improvise and lay strong emphasis on the quality education for girls⁴.

In fact the mass representation and change among women in Kashmir started from 1930’s with the emergence of freedom movement against dogra rule. It was in the segment of this movement that women in Kashmir were provided equal rights which were enriched in NAYA KASHMIR PROGRAMME which later guided all post-independent governments after 1947 in the development of Jammu & Kashmir state⁵. After dogra rule ended in 1947 the post

³ Tyndale Biscoe C. E, (1925). “*Kashmir in Sunlight & Shade*” (Seeley, Service & Co, Shaftesbury Avenue, 1925), book No: 1362R, Accession No: R-944.91, SP College Library, Srinagar, pp.257

⁴ Educational Reorganization Committee. (1939). Report, Srinagar: His Highness Government of Jammu and Kashmir, Kashmir Mercantile Press.pp.71

⁵ Dabla, B.A. (2012). “*Multi Dimensional Problems of Women in Kashmir*”, Gyan Publication House, New Delhi, pp. 9-10

independent governments planned to upgrade the status of Kashmiri women on modern lines in which education was given a special and outmost preference. But the initiatives framed by government were taken for granted at grassroot level in terms of proper planning and implementation of policies. As B.A Dabla reveals in '*Multi Dimensional Problems of women in Kashmir*' that after 1947, when the local leadership assumed political power in the state after a long period of alien political domination, the new successive governments in the state attempted to improve the conditions of women. Many efforts in this direction were stated like free modern education, especially professional and technical education for women from primary upto the university level. At the same time the government programmes for the welfare of the women were neither properly planned nor carried out in a serious pattern⁶. The problem with the women was multifaceted because the existing social issues and social conservativeness especially in rural areas were dominant over women and less was done to overhaul the scenario in which their quality education and empowerment turned a remote dream.

Education and the Liberation of Kashmiri Women

The liberation of Kashmiri women took place with the uprising in 1930 with the emergence of the quit Kashmir movement against Dogra Rule. It saw participation of women and recognition of women rights. But the real liberation of women folk was given practical shape in "Naya Kashmir" which was a plan to build new and modern Kashmir. In 1944 the National Conference party held an annual meeting and the aim of this meet was to inaugurate the party's Manifesto. Despite of other state development plans mentioned in the manifesto it also promised to give equal status to women in all the concerns of society and "to pull them out of the abyss of oppression and poverty, degradation and superstition, and from medieval darkness and ignorance into the sunlit valley ruled by freedom, science, and honest toil"⁷. The manifesto strongly believed that "Education is a pivot around which the progress of people revolves and it should not be merely liberal, but technical and allied to the national needs and as per National Economic Plan"⁸. The 'Naya Kashmir' Manifesto highlighted that the development of education should be equal for both boys and girls and strongly referred that National Educational Council must adopt schemes for education and welfare of children of the state on the following guidelines⁹:

It laid stress on applying mother tongue as a medium of instruction in all primary schools. In order to educate every child in the state the party recommended to establish large number of Primary, Middle and High schools, a special emphasis was also drawn for the establishment of kindergarten and other types of schools like boat schools for boatman people and traveling schools for the nomad class. It was thought that the ordinary state schools must be constructed for those who find it difficult to attend the normal school.

Secondly vision of accessing higher education was broadened, as in many areas it was difficult for students to travel especially for females to attend the state university. Therefore it

⁶ Ibid. p. 9

⁷ Kashmir Bureau of Information, New Kashmir: New Delhi, no date, 10.

⁸ Abdulla Sheikh Muhammad, *Naya Kashmir*, Bamzai; Director Kashmir Bureau of Information: New Delhi. Pp.38

⁹ Ibid. pp.38-39

was recommended establishing colleges at district level for both men and women. It was further deemed that such colleges shall be both liberal and technical in nature to produce quality education. The manifesto laid stress on the technical trainings and establishment of technical institutions for men and women that could meet the purposes of the state economic plan.

A unique initiative was to be taken for the establishment of schools that could work at night also called as night schools. Moreover to provide access to cheap and readily available books and other writing materials for students was in the plan. It includes the establishment of the chain of village and town libraries in the region. Important attention was given to the problems of basic education for women. It was deemed that special arrangements would be made for their welfare. A separate charter for women covering a chapter in the document of 'Naya Kashmir' promised to uplift women in the socio-political and economic fields. It was a guide and a pathway for women related developments in the state.

In order to fulfill these promises education was considered as a pivotal instrument to begin the process. During the implementation government at first establishment multipurpose schools and gave priority to the concept of social education. However during Sheikh Abdullah's tenure the process in universalization of education faced impediments especially in the case of female education. Though a college named Government Women's College was established in Srinagar in an old building. It was the first college in Kashmir which ignited the sense of higher education and awareness among women folk. But the access to education for female folk largely having rural background was a cumbersome job as the college was inaccessible to the rural women folk.

Re-Constitution of Education

Shorn of facilities in the rural areas and socio economic hitches in Kashmir, women became passive indicators of change. Reformation committee on education which started on 18th august 1950 was a step to provide the spirit to these passive indicators of change. Sheikh Abdulla wanted a practical shape of education to cater to the needs of society. The rural areas of Kashmir covering majority of the total population was lacking facilities and awareness to approach for education beside they had to deal with multi socio-economic problems. Thus they became slow indicators of change in the region. Educational reorganizational committee wanted to boost these indicators for overall development of the state. The spade work of the Educational Re-organization committee was started on the 18th of August 1950. Sheikh Abdullah addressed the committee to discuss newly formed issues under education sector of the state. The committee added the significance of education in life and focused on its practical shape to bring social change in the society of Kashmir.

The visionaries of the committee also examined the goal less existing system of education and they stressed to boost the existing system and to pull it out from stagnancy, creating constructive minds in the society is the only medium which can bring a social change¹⁰. It was felt before chalking out the future plan that the committee realized that the previous policy of divide and rule has given a setback to education. Access of education to rural areas

¹⁰ Report of educational reorganization committee, (1950) Government of Jammu & Kashmir, Department of Education, Central Secretariat Library; New Delhi, Ranbir Government Press, Jammu; 27-3-2007_500, pp. 1-2

was unregulated. Some areas had access and some areas had void. So it was considered to stop this unsystematic pattern of education and open door ways of education to everyone¹¹.

The basic recommendations of the committee were as:

i. Establishing Kindergartens and develop Primary Education: it signified integration of Kindergarten in the basic ladder of education. The committee suggested that schools encompass, children between the age group of 3 plus and 5 plus under the supervision of female teacher or if possible under the supervision of married female and male teacher as couple¹². Primary education should encompass arrange of 9 years and should start at the age of 5 plus. Primary education must have such a curriculum designed which can incorporate art and craft also. Upper middle classes (6th 7th and 8th) are replaced and put in the secondary education¹³.

ii. Nature of Secondary Education.

As regards secondary education it was deemed that secondary education should be of multipurpose value. Such schools were opened in towns, urban areas and in cities of Jammu and Srinagar. It was deemed that for choice carrier there should be a carrier master or councilor in multipurpose schools to guide and train I choice carrier if the students. Qualifying subjects were only four out of six and out of four three were compulsory and one was optional. Secondary girl's education was given a chief significance and it was deemed that in order to develop her personality at home level and in school, home science as subject was made compulsory for her and she was supposed to qualify it at any cost¹⁴.

iii. Infrastructure, Training and Qualification of Teachers

The committee was of the opinion that construction of school buildings should be combined efforts of public and students, and this joint initiative should be extended to other places also. The strict rule should be moderated for repairmen of furniture at local level on a wider scale. A small amount of funds at school level must be kept at the disposal and discretion of the school headmaster for the repairmen of furniture at local level. A department for construction of school buildings needs to be created under the control of director of education¹⁵. As regards training of teachers is concerned the age is fixed as 35 years and the training of teachers must be impacted by training teams who are well-versed in trainings. The emphasis was given on girl education and with regard to home science as a compulsory subject; training in the respect must be imparted via mobile female teacher (travelling female teacher) so that she can reach to most of the schools and train female teachers. The requisite qualification for the teachers was suggested as matriculate except in far flung areas it was suggested to be fixed as middle pass because of death of matriculate female teachers. Such suggestions reflected the goal to buildup education on modern standards¹⁶. These above recommendations had clear cut objectives to built education on modern system in the region.

¹¹ Ibid. p.2

¹² Ibid.pp.32

¹³ Ibid.pp.32

¹⁴ Ibid.pp.33

¹⁵ Ibid.pp.37

¹⁶ Ibid.pp.34

The universalization of equal Education

The year 1930 in Jammu and Kashmir witnessed first steps and initiatives for the achievement of universalization of primary education under the rule of the then Maharaja Hari Singh of Dogra regime. But its peculiarity was that this initiative was confined to boys only and confined to towns of Jammu and Srinagar. This resulted into its ineffectiveness. Besides it had inadequate government missionary to enforce and motivate the society to send their children to schools¹⁷.

In post independence period after 1947 the scheme showed less progress in the process of its implementation. Although in the separate constitution of the state which was framed after independence lead special provisions that claimed to give free and compulsory education to all. Article 20 of the states constitution (directive principles) clarifies that every resident of the state has the right to attain education which shall be free and compulsory and would be given upto university level¹⁸. All children between the age group of 6-14 will receive free and compulsory education¹⁹. Article 21 of the states separate constitution refers to provide equal opportunities in education, protection and safeguard from exploitation. Article 23 signified that that the state would own the responsibility of promotion of education for socially and economically backward classes and to offer them social justice²⁰. The plan was set time bound in order to achieve these goals. The framework was set to be attained within the span of 10 years.

This was carried out by Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad who emerged at the helm of affairs and galvanized the concept of universalization of education guaranteed under separate constitution of Jammu & Kashmir which encompassed free and compulsory education to all, by the expansion of educational institutions and in increasing the enrollment of students both male and females to eradicate illiteracy. Under his tenure most of the institutions for higher and technical institutes were established in cities and in towns also a number of primary middle and high schools were established in rural areas.

The contributions of Sheikh Abdulla and Bakshi Ghulam Muhammad towards education in Jammu and Kashmir cannot be counted alone by denying the contribution and impact of national level Commissions and Committee's especially on female education in the state that took place after independence.

Initiatives under new Government

Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad was inducted as prime minister of the state under the helm of Sadr-i-riyasat²¹ Mr. Karan Singh (1953-1964) (son of last Dogra ruler Maharaja Hari Singh). During Ghulam Mohammad Bakshi's political tenure many journalists of national and international importance arrived in Kashmir in order to ascertain that what socio-political developments have taken place in the state. It was reflected in their report that a positive change in the economic sector has occurred especially in the field of education, employment,

¹⁷ Census of India, (1961) "Jammu and Kashmir, General Report of Census Operations", Vol.-VI, Part I-A, Act No: (3) of Sammat, 1986.

¹⁸ Extracts from the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir State; Government Free Press, Srinagar (1973), pp. 23

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ The state of Jammu & Kashmir had its own Prime Minister and Sadr-e-Riyasat until 1965.

transportation and in agriculture²². Professor Hafsa Kanjwal maintains that regime of Bakshi succeeded in getting financial aid from the central government which facilitated framing and implementation of number of educational projects. He took initiatives to eradicate illiteracy and soon after his induction as Prime minister he took steps to provide free education from elementary stage upto higher level as was specified in the charter of Naya Kashmir Manifesto²³. The efficacy of his policy was such that it attracted 1.5 lakh students towards education in its first year of launch. By this move he displayed strong political skill. Earlier Sheikh Abdullah's step to increase the tuition fee was a burden which resulted in many strikes and agitations²⁴.

Bakshi took efforts to introduce basic education at primary level which was an appreciable step. His era witnessed enhancement of educational schools at all levels both in urban as well as in rural areas. Emphasis was given to mobile schools to give access to education for nomadic population like Gujjar and Bakerwals. Such steps and initiatives gave new spirit to the enrollment of students which rose from the level of 107233 in 1950 to 276351 and similarly roused to 400%. And by the year 1960 during his rule the establishment of schools hiked from 1360 to 3653. Also art college was opened in Jammu and Islamia college for Science and Commerce was introduced in Srinagar.

The free education policy boosted educational budget from six percent to twelve percent of the state's total revenue from 1950 to 1956. The total expenditure on education also showed growth upto 500 percent. Following year in 1957, 50 primary schools were upgraded and transformed into basic activity schools²⁵. Some private and religious institutions were sponsored financially and scholarship scheme was also introduced to boost education among students of backward classes and weaker sections, Harijans and females. His government felt the need to appoint male and female teachers and also raised their salaries. Such steps provided a smooth path for females and Muslims to seek education. Before independence only 1.6% of Muslims could attain education but Bakshi's rule till 1961 witnessed a push of this percentage upto 11.03²⁶.

Following the parameters of Naya Kashmir in the tenure education of women became one of the main focuses and in order to motivate girls for education, he opened schools upto higher level which opened the doors for them to participate in socio-economic sphere of life²⁷. But the pace of development was not to that degree as was the need. The data below reflects the status of female education from 1950-1956.

²² Hafsa Kanjwal, (2017) *Building A New Kashmir: Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad and the Politics of State Formation in a Disputed Territory (1953-1963)*, Thesis, History & Women Studies, University of Michigan, , pp. 44

²³ Directorate of Information & Broadcasting, (1954) "Jammu & Kashmir 1953-1954. A review of the achievements of Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad", Srinagar, Ranbir Printing Press

²⁴ P. N Bazaz, (1959). *Daughters of the Vitasta: A history of Kashmiri women from early times to the present day*. New Delhi: Pamposh Publications. 119-120

²⁵ S.L Seru, (1977) "*History and Growth of Education in Jammu & Kashmir 1872-1973*", Allama Iqbal Library, University of Kashmir, Ali Mohammad & Sons, Srinagar, p.176

²⁶ Op.cit, P.N Bazaz, pp.119-121

²⁷ Ibid. p. 294

Girl's Education in Kashmir year: 1951-1956

List	Number of students 1950-1951		Number of Students 1955-1956	
	Total	Boys - Girls	Total	Boys - Girls
Primary Stage	55057	47078 7979	65091	57862 7229
Middle Stage	24959	18105 6854	35363	29797 5586
Higher Secondary Stage	20700	18568 2132	65591	57862 7729

Source: file edu- a66-c/55, State Archives Srinagar Kashmir, Statistics regarding Women's Education

This information was submitted by the state of Jammu & Kashmir to chief education planning of India. The information was related to the status of women education in the year 1950-1956 which shows that the number of girls enrolled at different levels of education against boys. The numbers reflect that there was a wide gap and disparity in the sector of education regulated to female education. Though it does not cover progress of the year 1960-61, the state report stated that the data regarding the year 1960-61 has not been possible to collect at that very stage²⁸.

Reasons behind Educational Backwardness among Females

1. Political disturbances:

The disturbances at political level remains one of the important reasons which sidelined the motives of government to built strong education system and involve women folk equal to men in socio-political and economic spheres. Kashmir turned into a turbulent zone due to the failure of India and Pakistan in maintaining cordial relations. PNK Bamzai says in *cultural and political history of Kashmir* that in early months of 1953 the political and economic situation in Kashmir was passing through a severe crisis. The people in general and the National Conference in particular were astounded at the change of attitude of Sheikh Abdullah towards the position of the State in the Indian Union²⁹. Moreover, the series of the political events that the state underwent like Kabali's invasion or intrusion, armed conflict between India and Pakistan, arrest of Sheikh Abdulla, installation of Bakshi's regime and unmotivated fundamentalists faction were political turbulences and commotions which defeated the urgent considerations to address serious issues like education in general and women in particular.

2. Conservative societal attitude

The nature of the society of Kashmiri has largely remained patriarchal and conservative towards women folk. The social stigmas like early marriages, domestic issues, patriarchy and

²⁸ Education Secretarial, (9th Dec 1955) Statistics regarding Women's Education, file edu- a66-c/55, AR No: 8433, S. No: 1167, section of Women's Education, State Archives Srinagar Kashmir, pp.1-11

orthodoxy had kept women ignorant of rights and duties. This was the main reason which had shattered their interest in education and they were accustomed to domestic chores rather than in seeking education. Education brings out leadership skills in women and economic justice between genders but the same was considered as a threat over the patriarchal foundation which was often not accepted in the male dominated society. Still women folk step by step came out of such conservative hurdles but with a less degree of sensitivity and support.

3. **Unawareness among women:**

One such factor that had lead to the backwardness of women in the field of education in post 1947 period was due to unawareness of advantages of education. It was due to her individual disinterest as well as her less access to the educational spots i.e. schools as schools were in scarce. No such women organization at state level did exist at that time which could have made the women aware of their rights at grassroot level. The result would have been effective in motivating women towards education and would have dispersed their disinterest and create enthusiasm among them. Beyond that there was an unhealthy thought prevailing in the society that birth of a female is a cumbersome of expense and non productive than the male who becomes an economic source rather a bread earner.

4. **Lack of Infrastructure and facilities:**

For productive learning and teaching it is imperative to set basic arrangements and to maintain a good environment. unfortunately in Kashmir one such reason which had led to less participation of girls in schools was due to poor infrastructure and lack of basic facilities like proper furniture, proper learning materials, good school buildings, drinking facilities and toilets. In many rural areas and small towns students left the education ladder due to lack of basic facilities and quality of teaching in government schools leading to more female dropouts and less enrollment.

Conclusion:

It is crystal clear that after 1947 for the first time attempts were being taken to enhance the condition of women as compared to the previous times where they were subjugated to illiteracy and discrimination. But after independence in 1947 under the new government despite of having a constructive plan like (Naya Kashmir) state still had less to offer women. The new government had got subdued into upheavals after independence which had sidelined the environment in which holistic development of women through education was possible. Although it is observed that under Bakshi's government a practical shape was given to the field of education. The growth of female literacy in the state had also shown momentum but with slow pace. In comparison to other states female literacy in the state of Jammu & Kashmir was at low ebb due to specific reasons like poverty, patriarchal society, political disturbance, unawareness among women folk and lack of facilities like access to schools, transport facilities and lack of clear cut directions. But after 1947 things had changed and took a positive turn that not only created awareness among the women but had enhanced her conditions in the society.