



Social Movements that Led to Social Transformation in Jammu and Kashmir During The British Rule

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Abstract

The article tries to examine and study the role of some of the Hindu social reform movements that came up during the British rule to transform, modernise, and uplift society by imparting modern or western education. The article studies their role in eradicating social evils like child re-marriage, dowry and sati among the Hindu community in Jammu and Kashmir. In addition to these elements, it also tries to enlighten the role of various Hindu reform movements in imparting the education among all sections of the society without any discrimination.



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Introduction

The growth and formation of the socio-religious reform movements like in other parts of India were similarly one of the crucial and significant developments in the history of this region. As we are familiar with, the growth of these movements in other parts of India during the British colonial rule was mainly by dint of the emergence of the modern educational system and the rise in the political awakening movements. Similarly, in Jammu and Kashmir, the emergence of the reform movements, whether political, social or religious, brought up the enlightenment and modernisation in the societies. There are various reasons associated with the emergence of these reform movements in Jammu and Kashmir, and the most significant among

them was the presence of the British colonial rule and Dogra oppressive regime (Kaur, 1996). The emergence and the growth of the movements mainly grew out from the reform movements that were at that time active in other parts of the country (Jones, 1990). The growth of these movements even helped a lot in shaping the political structure of the state. The presence of the newly educated influential leaders, prominent leaders of the new middle class and other intellectuals favoured the region's transformation along with its political spectrum. The recipients of modern western education were teaching their fellow citizens in missionary schools and who are supposed to be the first ones who were able to impart contemporary education here in this region (Prasad, 2014). They illuminated light in the society

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and threw light on various colonial regimes in which the most oppressive regime was of Dogras. It was by dint of the reformative movements that helped a lot in raising a voice against these colonial forces (Akram *et al.*, 2015). This modern education was spread through the missionary schools. Social evils like illiteracy, orthodoxy, untouchability, conservatism and other dominant social evils were mostly wiped off due to the modernisation of the society. The presence of the new middle-class intellectuals, who mainly were the recipients of the contemporary education in the society, carried a deep impression of missionary movement.

In the year 1919, the administration had cited the existence of nearly twenty societies, Anjumans and Sabhas, in the state that were representing the diversity of different cultures and societies and most importantly, they were representing the interests of the lower castes of the state who were mainly Rajputs, Dogras, Brahmans, Sikhs, Kashmiri Pandits, Thakkars and Kashmiri Muslims.¹ Soon after the passage of eight years, there started a bombardment of the socio-reform movements by virtue of modern educational enlightenment in the state, and it was in the year 1927 which listed nearly the presence of one hundred socio-reform movements in the area. These reform movements were the constituents of larger Sabhas and Anjumans who were booming in the distant and different regions of the state.²

The leadership of the newly educated young intellectuals was of more relevance and enormous unequivocal by the fact that they were the only available sources in the state who could get rid of dangerous social evils like human trafficking, particularly of women, casteism, untouchability, widowhood, child marriage along with the presence of two dominant colonial rules (British and Dogra) who were prevalent in the state at that time. In addition to the colonial oppressions, the region was also witnessing a form of a failed economy and political structure (Garner, 2013). The emergence of these movements in the state was a need of an hour, and the development of these reform movements was the only sole remedy for their rectification (Ganaie, 2015b).

The thorough study of these distinct and multiple socio reform movements in parts of Jammu and

Kashmir definitely helped a lot in tracing out the ways and methodologies which were most effective in making the people of the area error-free by dint of their social reformation activities by virtue of the contemporary forms of education. The advancement in society was possible only due to the spread of modern education, and earlier versions of the society became advanced and error-free from various social evils. The contemporary forms of education ignited the people's minds, and they also became active in easing other forms of social and political crimes. The people started revolting against the British colonial rule and raised their concerns about other unstable laws (Rai & Rai, 2018). For the disposal and the redressal of these social evils from society, the need of an hour was necessary, which could easily make society error-free, and these reform movements were greatly helpful in making the society error-free and crime-free as compared to its older version, which was lacking the contemporary form of education. These developmental or welfare gestures directly or indirectly managed the society and helped it a lot in making it a welfare society. These reform movements, whether political, social or economic, helped a lot in revolutionising the region and people of the society became more active and responsible towards their society by considering reforms and social change as a basic need of the society (Khan, 2009). These multipurpose religious and social reform initiatives were not limited to any specific region or were not belonging to any majority group of people but were formed, framed and established in all the regions of the society irrespective of any discrimination, besides being getting recognition and other sorts of benefits from the then government. In Jammu and Kashmir, socio-religious reforms movements mainly consisted of three main religions, viz., Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.

Socio-Reform Movements: Hindus

The emergence and the development of the socio-reform movements within the Hindu community of the state holds an important and significant place in the history of Kashmir. Socio-reform movements of the Hindus were one of the oldest movements. These reform movements launched in parts of Kashmir were similarly based on the reform movements that were at that time active in other parts of India. These reform movements had their ideologies and objectives similar to the movements, which were also active in other parts of the country

(Verma, 1994). Social reforms, social transformation, modern education and evil free society were the main motive behind the formation of these movements' The influential intellectuals of the Hindu community who were impressed and enlightened by modern education launched the following reform movements in the Hindu community for the welfare of its members, which are listed and discussed as:

Arya Samaj

The emergence and rise of the Arya Samaj in the history of Kashmir is one of the crucial developments that has its role in transforming the state's society. This reform movement's growth is considered one of the oldest reform movements that were launched within the Hindu community for the welfare of their deprived and downtrodden ones, besides relieving them from all social evils. The presence and foundation of the Arya Samaj came up in Jammu and Kashmir in the year 1892 (Kaur, 1996, p. 54). With the culmination of the 18th century, there were four Arya Samaj associations present in the state, and two of the most prominent out of the four had their locations at Hazarui Bagh in Srinagar (Arora, 2005, p. 5). Arya Samaj was primarily a religious reform movement that was mostly confined to the State's Jammu region from the very beginning.³ This movement was not associated or affiliated with any of the political movements in the state during the initial period.⁴ The establishment of the Arya Samaj in the state was not done by the local Hindus there. However, its foundation came up by the outsiders who were Hindus by Religion and mainly had come to Jammu and Kashmir from the neighbouring States, especially from Punjab, as State employees and had settled here in different parts permanently or temporarily either for job or business purposes. Despite its rivalry with one of the States famous Sanathan Dharm Sabha, the Arya Sabha set up its different branches in various valley towns.⁵ The establishment and expansion of the Arya Samaj was thoroughly criticised by the Sanathan Dharm Sabha, whose establishment came up during the year 1917, and for the same, a pamphlet was issued and distributed further, which led to the anger among the founding members of the Arya Samaj in Srinagar. Arya Samaj was disfavoured the main doctrines of the Sanathan Dharam, which was 'Kashmir for Kashmiris', and it meant for the expulsion of the non-Kashmiris or people who had settled here and had mainly come from the neighbouring States who were

mainly from Punjab for the purpose of employment or business.⁶ Slowly and steadily, with the passage of time, the Hindus residing in the Kashmir valley parts extended their full support to Arya Samaj in all forms of its social works. The foundation of this reform movement was not aimless, and its base was formed by keeping in mind certain aims and objectives, which were the leading causes behind the formation of this reform movement for transforming the States and wiping out all of its social evils. Its objectives are listed as:⁷

"To propagate Vedic principles, to fight against the caste system, to raise the status of women, to educate the women, to abolish the civil institution of child marriage and to promote re-marriage and protection of widows" (Ganaie, 2015a).

With the passage of time, the movement grew more assertive and started shining and flourishing fully in most parts of the state, and Hindu subjects of the community started getting benefitted from this reform movement. It successfully weed out all the social evils and left no stone unturned in cleaning society from the most dangerous social evils. From the years 1920-30, the Samaj became successful in celebrating the marriages of half a dozen widows in Srinagar, and in addition to this, the reform movement regularly held public meetings and the procession.⁸ According to the Samaj, the organisation's primary membership was open to anyone and most teachers who were acting as officials were also part of it. The active officials associated with the Samaj were authorised to gather subscriptions for the Tilak Swaraj Fund in the city of Srinagar. Besides this, the Samaj members preached and focused on Hindu Muslim unity, and in addition to this, they were disfavoured the cattle's slaughter.⁹

The Samaj celebrated its 29th anniversary in the Jammu region of the state from 12 August 1921 to 15 August 1921 and in this celebration, most of the speeches were praising Mahatma Gandhi besides favouring and supporting the principles of his movements like Swaraj, Non-cooperation and boycott of Schools.¹⁰ During the celebration of its anniversary from 21 March to 23 March 1925, which was celebrated in Jammu's city, enormous processions were carried out during its first anniversary followed by a massive number

of meetings that were scheduled in the premises of the Dogra Hall. Limitations on the celebration of its first anniversary did not end here, but its anniversary day was celebrated in the Kashmir valley (Srinagar) from 27 June to 6 July 1925 at two different places, namely Hazarui Bagh and Habba Kadal of the Srinagar city. Movements prominent leaders in the celebration were Swami Shri Shiv Ratnanand Ji Saraswati, Pandit Gopi Nath, Editor, 'Akbar-i-Aam', Pandit Prasad Ram Zadoo, Pandit Gopi Nath Kala and Pandit Thakur Joo Manwatis were the activists who took the leading role in celebrating its anniversary and in addition to these annual meetings, processions were also taken into consideration. The presence of the Arya Samaj was not fully spread in all parts, but it was limited to the urban centres in the city because, at that time, most people were not active in the sort of movement, mostly due to the colonial rule and were preoccupied with extreme economic hardships and narrowness.

Unlimited credit can be attributed to the emergence of this reform movement, and its enormous glory in the form of socio-reform activities in eliminating prevalent social evils from the society is of significant value and scope. This movement helped a lot in tackling the colonial rule and helped a lot in representing all the society members irrespective of caste, creed and sex. Besides this, it helped a lot in transforming the social base and values through the means of contemporary and scientific ways of education.

The Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Punjab

Transformation of the society and weeding out all of its social evils was not an easy job, and it needed the support and emergence of various other reform movements that could help the society grow at high speed and remove all of its dominant evils in less span of time. Mass movements and the various voluntary organisation's mass participation became the need of the hour for all the State subjects' welfare. For the same, another Hindu reform movement came up in the form of Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, which came upon 24 December 1895 under Act XXI of 1860. It represent the Arya Samaj in the Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan and Kashmir.¹¹ This reform movement, like the previous reform movement, also came up with specific aims and objectives, which are listed as:¹²

"To establish a Vidyalaya for the teaching of the Vedas and ancient Sanskrit classics and for the preparation of Arya Padeshak; the object of which was being attained through the Gurukula University started in 1902, at kangri near Haridwar. This Vedic magazine Gurukula Samachar, printed in Lahore, was the accredited organ of the institution, to establish a library of religious and scientific books for the general public, to publish tracts and books for the purpose of reviving the teaching of Vedas, to arrange for the preaching of Vedic dharma in the Punjab, Kashmir, the northern-west frontier, Sindh, Baluchistan and other places and to devise means and to take measures for the propagation of the Vedic dharma. The object of preaching and propagating dharma was being fulfilled by the regular working of a number of preachers and celebrating the anniversaries of Arya Samaj. Moreover, the Sabah published two periodicals, one in the Arya language and another in the English language. The Arya language monthly magazine contained information about the working of the various institutions of the Sabha and embodied expositions of Veda mantras. The Vedic magazine Gurukula Samachar was an English monthly devoted to Vedic religion, Brahmin Charya, ancient Aryan civilisation and culture, Indian economics, and general interest matters."

Arya Kumar Sabha

The societies in the State of Jammu and Kashmir were suffering from the massive social evils that had swept them from very long ago, and the rise of various reform movements was a requirement. Still, the state was suffering from massive evils and obstacles, the unrepresented Hindu youths of the Kashmir who were not part of the earlier reform movements formed a new reform movement, namely Arya Kumar Sabha, in the year 1910 in Jammu city of the State, and later its branch was established at Rainawari (Srinagar) to transform and reshape the States social structure. The movement mainly consisted of the ignored sections of the society who were not part of any reform movements. This reform movement came upon the basis of Arya Samaj, and it was affiliated with it. This independent reform movement among the Hindus was based on the Sanatanist principle of Hinduism.¹³ At the time of the emergence of this movement, the Hindus' condition in Kashmir was too grim. They were the victims of the worst social evils and corrupt practices in which the

worst were child marriage, illiteracy, widowhood and seclusion, along with other social evils like wasting of an enormous amount of money on marriages, dowry system and it can be justified with an example like, Hindu bridegrooms used to go for their brides in the Mughal style with pomp and show. The Arya Kumar Sabha was disavouring these social evils, and it criticised them in each and every form. For the same, they organised various types of seminars, religious gatherings, modern education usage, etc., for the total abolition of these unwanted evils from society.

Kashmiri Pandit Sabha

The establishment of the Kashmir Pandit Sabha came up mainly for the Kashmiri Hindus' welfare and the restoration and preservation of Kashmiri culture and social values. The birth of the reform movement came up during the year 1914, and soon after its flourishing, it achieved enough momentum in the Jammu city of the State mostly. In addition to the social and religious reforms, the movement was associated with the carrying of relief works and joined hands for mutual help without any influence of political backing. The movement from the very beginning of its launch came up strongly for the welfare of the weaker sections of society. It worked day and night for the underprivileged ones in the state, in which the actual beneficiaries included widows, orphans, elderly and disabled people surviving in the Kashmiri pandit community. The Sabha aims, and objectives were to "reform the Hindu community in the state, work for the physical and moral uplift of Hindus and render financial help to their brethren in case of distress."¹⁴

Dharm Sabha

The Dharm Sabha foundation was laid by Pandit Hargopal Koul, a popular and prominent influential activist associated with this movement. This reform movement meant for the upliftment and social transformation of the Hindu community was a composition of the Hindu orthodox community.¹⁵ The reasons behind the creation of this movement were the presence of the enormous social evils which had dominated the community from ancient times, and the movement was favouring a healthy society that should be free from all social evils and for the same necessary action, they came up with the inauguration of this new reform movement. To transform society, they worked day and night for

the upliftment of the poor and the most deprived ones in the society; besides this, they utilised new techniques and available sources to remove all evils from society. The association was favouring and stressed much on widow re-marriages, and it gained new heights after the party founder's demise. With the passage of time, the leadership of the party came under the hands of the new energetic and educated youths who utilised all sources for the betterment of their community members, and the dominance of the party was influential under the presidentship of Pandit Amar Nath Kak in the Hindu conservative leaders were seen dominant. The mission behind the creation of this reform movement was based on these objectives like, social reform among the Kashmiri Hindus, Education advancement, the simplification of marriage ceremonies and widow re-marriages.

The Fraternity Society

The emergence of the fraternity society in the state came up as another bonanza for the upliftment of the weaker sections of the society and particularly for the upliftment of the most downtrodden ones in the society. This reform movement came up at the right time and laid much stress on the suppressed communities welfare. The organisation was entirely in support of the Hindu re-marriage. For the successful implementation of the same, they had submitted a memorandum before the Maharaja¹⁶ of the State in the year 1930 for legalising the re-marriage of the Hindu widows (Bazaz, 1959) and officially, it resulted in the establishment of a new organisation in the form of 'The Fraternity' under the able leadership of Prem Nath Bazaz in 1930. The association mainly focussed on widow re-marriage, which at that time was one of the burning issues prevailing in the Hindu society, and it was made possible soon after its successful establishment by dint of its hard work and sincere efforts. The organisation for the same worked day and night for the major social evils like child marriage, widow re-marriage, dowry and wastage of enormous amount of money on marriage celebrations. The organisation emphasised women education, the transformation of cultural customs, enhancement in the community health sector, along with dress (Bazaz, 1959). The influential leader of the association Prem Nath Bazaz who was tagged as the leading spirit behind the formation of this association, had established contact

with Mahatma Gandhi and had discussed with him the issue of widow re-marriage and had asked him for his guidance and help. For the redressal of the same, Mahatma Gandhi had written a letter to him in which he had requested the young Hindus of the State to marry only if they find a widow. The organisation finally became successful in achieving its prescribed aim and objectives besides favouring society's transformation through the means of modern education.

Jammu and Kashmir Women's Welfare Association

The origin and growth of the women's welfare association came up with various organisations and associations for the welfare, upliftment, women empowerment, equality, and protection of women's rights in society. This organisation's sole aim was women upliftment, and it totally disfavoured each and every sort of ill deed and misunderstanding that was prevailing in society. The formation of the women's welfare association officially came during the year 1927, which was focussing on the women upliftment, and after the gap of one year, its another branch came up in the Jammu city during the year 1928 for the upliftment of the women subjects of the Jammu (Kaur, 1996). The motive behind this reform organisation's formation was that there should be one central organisation that should coordinate and work on the women's existing welfare works. The association consists of four sections headed by separate presidents and controlled by a subcommittee. The four sections are "Education, Industrial, Health and Recreational" (Kaur, 1996).

Over time, the organisation started working on women issues mainly related to women education and educating women, particularly minors, was its priority. For the same, a group of six girls and a teacher was arranged, besides this, another organisation in the form of the Women's Welfare trust was also affiliated with it, and it provided timely support and encouragement from time to time. The organisation's sole aim was to impart education to the women and work for their empowerment, and the processing of the same Tutorial Service Schools were launched in the state to educate the adult illiterate women. The association's role in imparting education to women and working for their upliftment was of tremendous scope and importance (Bazaz, 1959).

The Kashmiri Pandit's Social uplift Association

With the massive rise in the uprisings of the reform movements in the state and welfare and the upliftment of the weaker sections of the society was on rising, the highly influenced educated youth of Kashmir was much overwhelmed by the rise in reform movements, and they took a keen interest in the reforms. They were not fully satisfied with the current reform movements, and they found a gap somewhere in them. Finally, a new association in the form of the Kashmiri Pandit's Social uplift Association came up during the year 1931 in the Ganderbal region of the Kashmir valley. This organisation was launched by dint of some officials belonging to the postal, forest and medical departments. The association was purely focussing on social issues, and all of its members worked day and night for the welfare and upliftment of the women.

Conclusion

The emergence, growth and development of the reform movements, which were mainly religious and political in nature, came up there in the society firstly due to oppressive and colonial rules or the British and the Dogras; secondly, their emergence came up due to the impact of the modern educational system in the society. The state was a victim of the oppressive rules, and the presence of enormous social evils was dominating the state through wrong impressions. The emergence and growth of the social and political movements' motives were to make the state free from colonial forces, eliminate oppressive rules, and entirely erase and wipe out all the state's social evils. Most of the movements at the beginning were religious reform movements. Later due to the advancement of the society due to modern education, they became political in nature for the welfare of the society and state. Some of the religious reform movements that were politically active later became the founding stones for the growth of separatism. Reform movements like the 'Khalistan Movement' and 'Jamaat-I-Islami' became the idols for the surge in separatism. Jamaat-I-Islami, which mainly focused on religious reform activities, became the epicentre for the growth of the separatism or Hurriyat forces in the valley.

Similarly, the 'Khalistan Movement' working and focusing on the welfare, upliftment, modernisation of Sikhs became a popular separatist movement

demanding a separate homeland for the Sikhs of the State (Ganaie, 2015c). Hence there is a deep link between the growth of religious reform movements and separatism in the state. The growth of separatism, armed insurgencies, religious superiority and nationalism based on religious supremacy has been the product of these religious reform movements who are considering religion as a separate factor in determining the National identity or nationalism.

Notes

1. List of Societies, Anjumans and Sabhas which existed in the state on 31/12/1918, OER, Political Department, 1919, File No. 312/7-c, JKA.
2. Letter from the inspector general of police, Srinagar, to the public works minister dated 12 November 1927, forwarding a list of Societies, Anjumans and Sabhas, Political and quasi-political and religious inexistence in the state on 31 December 1926, General Department, 1928, File No. 264/P-21, JKA.
3. Captain Trench, resident in Kashmir to dewan Amar Nath, chief minister to Maharaja, 16 September 1910, Jammu and Kashmir archives, File No. 215 of 1910.
4. National Archives of India, Foreign Department, Political, Branch-B, April 1910, No. 69-70.
5. National Archives of India, Home Department, political, November 1917, No.7, fortnightly report of second Half of October 1917.
6. J. Manners, resident in Kashmir to J.B Wood, 1st September 1917, national archives of India, Home Department, political, September 1917, No. 6.
7. See Political awakening in Kashmir by Kaur, 1996, pp. 54-55.
8. Census report of India, 1931, p. 297.
9. National Archives of India, Home Department, Political, August 1921, No. 18; Jammu and Kashmir Archives, File No. 18/19 of 1921.
10. Windham to Johnwood, 7/10/1921, National Archives of India, Home Department, Political, September 1921, No. 18, fortnightly report for the second half of September 1921.
11. Jammu and Kashmir Archives, File No. 115 of 1920.
12. The secretary, Arya Pratinidhi Sabha to the Chief Minister J&K, 1 October 1921, J&K

- Archives, File No. 115 of 1920.
13. Jammu and Kashmir Archives File No. 261/28-C of 1917.
 14. Jammu and Kashmir Archives, File No. 87/P-16 of 1914.
 15. Census report of India, 1901, p. 24.
 16. The term 'Maharaja' has been derived originally from Sanskrit literature, and it means 'Great King.' It referred mostly with the Hindu Monarch or Prince in India whose rank was above the 'Raja (King).' Prior to British rule in India, only the 'Rajas' of the most powerful States were accorded the titles of 'Maharaja.'

Note on Contributor

Dr. Nasir Ahmad Ganaie, a doctorate in Political Science from Department of Political Science, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, India, does research in public policy, comparative politics, conflict resolution, human rights, identity politics, separatism, regional studies, socio-economic disparity, terrorism and religious minorities in indigenous societies. Dr. Nasir is incredibly specialised in conflict studies and holds expertise in counter-terrorism operations. Most recent publications include 'Kashmir from Barriers of Discomfort to Hope: A Case of Hurriyat Conference' and 'Modernising Extremism: A Case of New Age Militancy in Kashmir.' Has been honoured as Global Goodwill Ambassadorship 2017 for Peace (Global Goodwill Ambassador of 2017) besides being awarded the three awards of international repute, which are:

- 'Excellent Researcher Award: 2018'
- 'Best Young Researcher Award: 2018' and
- 'Performance Excellent Award: 2019 for outstanding research calibre and services offered to humanity by actively working for the welfare of human rights. In addition to that, has been a recipient of various national and international memberships associated with the cause of various human rights organisations aimed for the welfare and upliftment of human dignity. Additionally, holds a strong membership of various national and international academic bodies besides holding an additional chair of Editor-in-Chief of the International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Review.

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Conflict of Interest

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