

Indigenous Education in Jammu and Kashmir Under the Dogra Rulers 1846-1885

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ABSTRACT

The present paper attempts to assess the development of education in Jammu and Kashmir under the Dogras rulers from 1846-1885. The system of education in Jammu and Kashmir was informal and indigenous. Education was given by the Pandits and Moulvies to boys in Pathshalas and Madrassas. The first Dogra Maharaja Gulab Singh was too busy in consolidating his dominions to pay much attention to the education status of his subject. Although Maharaja Ranbir Singh, his successor, was first to take an active interest in education and made some attempts at founding a few states supported institutions, the indigenous education was imparted to the students in these institutions.

Introduction

On the 16th March, 1846, Seven days after the Treaty of Lahore, Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu Signed the Treaty of Amritsar, by which he became the Maharajah of Jammu and Kashmir.¹ Maharaja Gulab Singh, the first ruler of J&K State, spent most of his time in consolidating his territories. It is believed that he did little in the field of education.² Gulab Singh died, his son Ranbir Singh was sufficiently experienced to take upon himself the arduous duties of the ruler of the largest Princely State of India.³ Ranbir Singh's reign was marked by the emergence of Modern cultural trends, and the ruler himself was no less a factor in bringing about renaissance in the sphere in his State.⁴ He brought about a revolutionary change in the field of education. Being gifted with a scholarly bent of mind and his focus in the progress of education was not limited only to the State; he donated liberally to Sanskrit Pathshala at Banaras and established a big Sanskrit Pathshala at Kanshi.⁵ Several schools were opened in Jammu and Srinagar and in some of the smaller towns.⁶ He took keen personal interest in the advancement of education throughout his kingdom. He established regular schools and pathshalas, makhtabs and vocational classes.⁷ In A History of the University of the Punjab, published in 1933, Professor J F Bruce notes a donation of Rs 62,500 (one lakh of Srinagar rupees) from Sir Ranbir Singh, Maharaja of Jammu & Kashmir, "in response to an explanation given to the representative of the State by the Secretary to the Punjab Government under instructions from Sir Donald McLeod, the Lieutenant-Government under" in 1868. This sum was increased to Rs 93,478 by 1882. An endowment of Rs 30,978 received by the Trustees of the Punjab University College (the forerunner of the University of the Punjab) on the 2nd March, 1871, had increased to Rs 41,250 and its interest provides the McLeod Kashmir Sanskrit Research Studentship of the value of Rs 100 per mensem. When the University of the Punjab was established in 1882, Maharaja Ranbir Singh was entered as the Fellow of the University.⁸ All the educational institutes of the State were affiliated to this university.⁹ He established the first Printing press in the State and 'the Jammu and Kashmir Gazette' was published for the first time in the Ranbir Printing Press in 1882.¹⁰ Persian was the official language, but so many of the highest officials were Dogras that was constantly spoken in Kashmir Durbar in Jammu. In Jammu, Dogree was used for the

accounts and for all the written documents submitted to the Maharaja, and the Police and Revenue Regulations, as also a few elementary books had been prepared in the same language.¹¹ Maharaja established a translation department under the aegis of eminent scholars to translate books from Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian and English into Dogri, Urdu and Hindi. Books in different subjects like Astronomy, Mathematics, Physics, Zoology and Chemistry were printed in the Ranbir Press for free distribution to all scholars of the government schools, pathshalas and madrassas.¹² Maharaja Ranbir Singh was eager to make Jammu a center for learning of Sanskrit and establishes two Pathshalas, one at Jammu and the other at Purmandal.¹³ One visitor to Kashmir in 1875, George Buhler, recoded a visit to a school with the Maharaja during which Ranbir Singh himself examined the students and discussed their Subjects in an informed and interested way. Those schools, the chief education institution in Kashmir, had a Sanskrit college in which poetry, grammar and philosophy were taught. There were Persian classes, a school of industry and mathematics classes (in geometry and algebra) according to a Dogra translation of the Lilavati.¹⁴ Modern education does not seem to have existed in Kashmir until the advent of Christians missionaries in Kashmir.¹⁵ Education of all types was free and all students were given stipends in the shape of free books and free boarding and loadings. These Pathshalas were part and parcel of the Raghunath Temple and Ranbireshawaram Temple and Gadadharji at Jammu and Gadadharji Temple at Utterbehni.¹⁶ Education in his reign may be judged from the figures available in some of the Administration Reports in Urdu by his Government. According to the Report -i- Majumi of 1872-1873, the total number of schools and Pathshalas in the State was 44. Of these there were 31 schools in Jammu and 13 in Kashmir. In the two capital cities there were 10 institutions with a total attendance of 1,533 students during that year. The subject-wise break-up of the scholars was: Shastri (Sanskrit) 701, Persian 457, Dogri 250, Arabic 70 and English 55.¹⁷ These institutions were thrown open to scholars from the adjoining regions and from all over India.¹⁸ It is very difficult indeed to find evidence of a single school in the valley of Kashmir in the first half of the 19th century. They seem to have been completely eliminated. The first to start again in 1868 was a state school and by the end of the 19th century we see a small sprinkling of them.¹⁹ Ranbir Singh took personal interest

in the advancement of education. He revived the old system of education on the pattern of Madrassa and Pathshala and also took steps to modernize education. He established a number of schools and a college each at Jammu and Srinagar on the British model and introduced the latest curriculum in the new type of educational institutions.²⁰ Later, the modernization of education led to the establishment of two colleges one each at Jammu and Srinagar, which gave final shape to the education policy of Ranbir Singh.²¹ The course of study were study over to impart education under proper University syllabi when the Punjab University was opened in 1882.²² To keep students active in learning and to enable them to acquire the required standard, a comprehensive system of Periodical check-up and examination was framed: monthly, Half-yearly & Annual examination were conducted.²³ At the end of each course degrees and medals were awarded to the successful and deserving student after the examination under the seals of Shri Raghunathji and the signatures of the members of examining board.²⁴ A number of teachers, specializing in each study, were appointed on good salaries.²⁵ Teachers were placed in five grades according to which their salaries were fixed in 1847 as under:

First grade, Rs. 100 per month; second grade, Rs. 50; third grade, Rs. 30; fourth grade, Rs. 20; fifth grade, Rs. 10. Later on, these grades were reduced to only four in Maharaja Ranbir Singh's time and salaries for each grade was refixed-I grade, Rs. 100; II Grade, Rs. 80; III Grade, Rs. 60; and IV Grade, Rs. 30. For every fifty students under a teacher, an assistant was provided who was given Rs. 10. A pandit well versed in two or three Shastras was given the pay of the first grade; provided he imparted education in two or three Shastras.²⁶ The Srinagar school was opened in 1874, to teach up to the Middle Standard. Education was imparted in Persian and Sanskrit. There was a separate Department for the teaching of Arabic for Muslims students. In 1883, there were 450 boys on its rolls.²⁷ Some Madrassas, Maktabas and Pathshalas had been established in Kashmir.²⁸

Literary Activity

The hectic literary activity during Ranbir Singh's reign received life and vigour from his personal interest and care about this aspect of cultural life of the people of the state.

Thousands of rare manuscripts in different languages were constantly and perseveringly sought after and collected, purchased or copied if not available by sale. Dr Karan Singh has rightly remarked that "the manuscripts in this library contain works not only in Sanskrit but also in Hindi, Urdu, Persian, Arabic, Ladakhi, Dogri, Telugu and the Sharda script, thus well reflecting the unique diversity of our cultural heritage".²⁹ Teams of Qualified scholars as copyists copying MSS of various scripts for Ranbir Singh's library, and galaxies of linguists translating from Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Bodhi and other languages into Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu, Persian and Dogri those works which were found to be of colossal use to the public and which could form part of courses of study in various arts, sciences and crafts taught in schools, colleges, Pathshalas and Madrassas. By Ranbir Singh's personal magnetism the literary centers of Jammu, Srinagar, Utterbehni and Purmandal seemed to have imbibed once again the great tradition of Taxila and Nalanda, Vikramshila and Ujjain. This multifarious literary activity was scientifically carried out under the Ranbir Singh's direct supervision.³⁰ His court attracted learned men from all over India which included Pt. Brij Lal of Jaipur, Rasmohan Bhattacharya from Bengal and Khalifa Noor-ud-Din, the first successor of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, besides a large several learned men from inside the State.³¹ Dr. Stein who catalogued the manuscripts says that "it was the Maharaja's desire to revive the study of Vedic texts which in his dominion as well as in Punjab had practically ceased for centuries".³²

Conclusion

The study ends with the brief conclusion that the Maharaja Gulab Singh the real founder the State Jammu and Kashmir in 1846, but he had no time to reform in the field of education. When Maharaja Ranbir Singh ascended the throne of Jammu and Kashmir, he brought a revolutionary change in the field of education in Jammu city as well as whole of J&K State. The number of institutions increased in a couple of years and also increased in the number of Pathshalas, Madrassas as well. Maharaja Ranbir Singh was in favour of indigenous system of education. Until his death, Maharaja Ranbir Singh, no any school of modern education was set-up in the State.

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