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## Dogra Rule and the Marginalisation of Women in Kashmir

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### Abstract

This paper is an endeavor to analyze the situation of women under the rule of Dogras in the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. It endeavors to investigate the condition of Kashmiri women and the state of hopelessness and abuse they had experienced during the Dogra rule. The paper likewise centers around the social wrongs such as women trafficking, female feticide and prostitution, and furthermore examines their part in the opportunity battle against the abusive Dogra rule, to remove the dictatorial, dynastic, primitive, and strict principles of medieval ages. Women live in a critical space in the creating history of mankind. The accomplishment or the position involved or given to women frames a flat out part to decide the net progression of the general public. Women are the pith and essential piece of any general public on earth, however from days of yore they have been separated/underestimated in all circles of life like political, social, instructive, and so on. It is additionally a recorded certainty that Jammu and Kashmir was under the whimsical and barbaric rule of the Dogra's during the pioneer time frame. Furthermore, this rule had its effect on the whole people of the state, both men and women.

**Key words:** Dogra Rule, Marginalisation of women, Female Infanticide, Prostitution

### I

The province of Jammu and Kashmir which was under the oppressive rule of Dogras in the period from 1846-1947, is composed of three primary social units and topographical divisions—Jammu, Kashmir, and Ladakh. The state went under the abusive guidelines of Dogras when British vanquished Punjab in 1845.<sup>i</sup> In 1820 Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab expected the realm of Jammu as *jagir* to Maharaja Gulab Singh. By recognizing his reliable administrations Maharaja Ranjit Singh sanctioned him the care of Jammu as the Raja of the place.<sup>ii</sup> While it is regularly accepted that Kashmir inconveniences started when British made an agreement with Maharaja Gulab Singh of Jammu, prominently known as the 'Treaty of Amritsar'. Under this treaty Kashmir was offered to Maharaja Gulab Singh in lieu of money installment of 75 lakhs. This treaty announces Gulab Singh as the Maharaja (king) of the Jammu and Kashmir state and Maharaja Gulab Singh established the state with its current limits during a similar period.<sup>iii</sup>

Like the other stages of human history women were at the centre of marginalization during the rule of Dogras too. It is also an apparent phenomenon that women are generally related to silence, hardship, and underestimation, and are considered as more fragile or the second sex, despite the fact that actually sex is only an organic determinant of an individual, while as the sexual orientation is a social development which is socially designed or supported. Certainly women are getting progressively significant in the financial advancement of both created and creating economies, yet at the same time they are discovered to be the compliant and ruled part of society. Nonetheless, women are found to perform exceptionally well in the socio- economic growth of a place. The control of women fills in as a subject of much interest and importance. Also, ending up being makers of extraordinary food, women are found to perform troublesome tasks. Women additionally contribute a great deal in the social field, familial proficiency, and the economy of Kashmir. Moreover, food readiness and housekeeping, they additionally accomplish by crushing the grain and home support since ages. The solaces present in the contemporary period have not been consistently accessible and effectively available. The circumstances for the ladies to manage the house hold errands have consistently been very troublesome. The acts of rice pounding were done in a stone mortar with a weighty pestle and afterward rice was separated and cleaned. The women artists have been discovered drawn in themselves in the work with their spouses. Indeed, even in the cloak making, they assume an indispensable job.

The tradition and culture of women life-style in Kashmir has remained conservative and patriarchally-defined for many centuries. They were characterized by dominance and heaving lower social status in society. However, the status of some historical and prominent Kashmiri women which one gets from various ancient literary sources was considerably high. They distinguished themselves to the apex of fame, and existed as rulers, princesses, and commanders of army, and as perspectives of religious lore. We can say that there was no social activity in which women did not participate. But the authors of the ancient sources focused on individual women rather than on a class or group of common women. In the traditional Kashmiri society, women were the victims of wide spread illiteracy, segregation and complete denial/sidelining of individuality. Socially, women suffered from the denial of freedom in their own houses and also became targets of social and cultural suppression, unequal and inferior status. In the traditional society of Kashmir women were always considered as subordinate to the male supremacy, they remained dependent on the male members of the family and could not develop their personality or be independent within or outside their family/society.

The clarification of any social framework and culture is fragmented without reference to the position and part of the women society, on the grounds that in each social request it is truly women who are liable for raising the new age. On account of Kashmir as well, there are instances of women previously and in the recent times, who have shown their courage, ability, intellectualism, and different characteristics which decide their situation in different circles. In ancient Kashmir women have appreciated a lot of regard than in medieval period. There was an uncommon arrangement for their schooling and the period created great number of exceptionally learned women in ancient period. The wife of Shri Madan Mishra is said to have defeated the versatile philosopher Shankaracharya in a philosophical interaction. Awanti Sundari had composed a lexicon containing words used in Prakrit language and she had given her own compositions to demonstrate the usage of such words.<sup>iv</sup>

In ancient Kashmir many women attained great proficiency even in administration and were rendered an honorable position in the society. Also, women like Rani Dida, Kota Rani, and many others were involved in politics.<sup>v</sup> In the long past of Kashmiri history, the value of the poetry of Lal Ded has a place of its own in the local as well as the world literature. The deep insight into the human life and its practical aspects unfolded by Lal Ded are rated very superior and high. After her, Habba Khatoon's and Arnimal's poetic verses, though of a different tone and pattern, have shown the calibre of Kashmiri women in the field of literature which at the same time, underlines their intellectualism in the past medieval times and after. It could not have been without existence of roots of literacy in Kashmir and admittedly so, the Kashmiri women folk, by and large, was taking to literacy in the long past when in some other parts of the world women were living under the darkness of illiteracy.

The past history of Jammu and Kashmir depicts that women might have enjoyed a high status in the mainland India. But there was a considerable deterioration in the status of women. Female births were not much desired and their sufferings and pains magnified with the influx of Turko-Afghan raids for whom carrying away of girls/women during battles formed the prized item of booty. With new times, we also saw conditions gave new dimensions to the religious practice of *Sati* and female infanticide during the Dogra regime. The Dogra rule also saw the emergence of other socially-suppressive activities like ban on widow remarriage, trafficking of women, and prostitution etc. The Dogra Maharaja Gulab Singh claimed to be the absolute/autocratic sovereign. Moreover, he treated the whole state especially the impoverished valley of Kashmir as his purchased property. His successors also ruled with the same mandate and ideological backing. Thus, almost all the Dogra rulers indulged in gross misgovernment. It is worthwhile to mention that Muslim women were subjected and treated as 'objects' and sort of 'commodities'. Dogra's legalized flesh trade/prostitution in Kashmir especially of the women belonging to the Muslim community. It is strange to acknowledge that one considerable item of revenue to the Maharaja came from such illicit and inhuman practices, which most governments endeavor to conceal, due to the shame attached with it.<sup>vi</sup> Such an atmosphere wherein women were subjected to paid sexual violence and their bodies were commodified and objectified can be understood as:

Prostitution was legitimate and was not a culpable wrongdoing in Jammu and Kashmir during Dogra rule. Prostitutes were given permit by the state, as indicated by British authority report around 15 to 25 percent of the wages of the state came from burdening these prostitutes. In 1880 there were 18715 enlisted prostitutes in Kashmir who gave away a portion of their pay to the state as assessments.<sup>vii</sup> The report which came in Times London, constrained British government to ask, the official on special duty in Kashmir, namely Mr. Henry to discover reality with regards to it. He submitted report: the prostitutes, who are enlisted and burdened accordingly, are chiefly of the Wattal or lower rank. They are sold at youthful age by their folks to brothel keepers for Rs 200 or Rs 100 for each youngster. This isn't just perceived yet in addition recorded on stamped paper by the public authority. The assessed number of prostitutes obtained in this manner is 250 or 300 for Srinagar. They are partitioned into three classes as per their 'delights' and were burdened as needs be.<sup>viii</sup>

1st class rupees 40 per annum

2nd class rupees 20 per annum

3rd class rupees 10 per annum

Under the Dogra rule women of Kashmir were as much underestimated that state got quite a bit of income from these purported sex workers, however didn't spend any measure of cash on their wellbeing. As per Mr. Henry an official on special duty in 1880 who uncovers that an awful infection was spreading in Kashmir in light of the fact that no care was taken of sick sex workers. In the period from 1877-1879, 12977 patients came for treatment, among these 2516 were the individuals who have venereal infection, which is apparent from a report of Srinagar Mission Hospital.<sup>ix</sup> Rather than wearing clean garments women who attempted to achieve their dignity were obliged to wear filthy pieces of clothing for which, obviously, the Dogra system were critically dependable and which was best seen by Tyndale Biscoe.<sup>x</sup>

Female Infanticide was prevalent in mainland India but with the passage of time, some tribes moved towards Jammu who brought with them this custom of female infanticide. This has been documented by Deepika Sharma and Anita Rana in their book *Social Evils Among Women In Jammu And Kashmir During Dogra Period And Colonialism And Reforms (1846-1925)* as:

In the nineteenth century, from the investigation of the thought processes which prompted the evil custom, it turns out to be certain that the practice had its root somewhere down in the institution of caste and marriage. This exclusively was generally common among the Rajput families of Jammu region (Mians). When the girl was born, it was taken from its

mom, and either buried alive or all the more seldom uncovered in the forests. Another strategy was to bury the baby alive. The body was set in an earthen vessel and the top was covered with a thick paste of dung. For the most part, a little portion of opium was given to cause quick death. Another noticeable strategy was by causing injury to the naval. At the point when a several female children were born was done with following recognition- a bit of Gur (molasses) was put in the mouth of the kid, a skin of cotton was laid on her bosom and the accompanying chant recounted a few times “*Gur Khaiyn Pooni Kattin Apna Baiya Galena*”(Eat your sugar, spin your thread, send a brother in your stead)<sup>xi</sup>

Usually the infants were killed by various practices and so the patriarchal mindset used to solace itself. Due to such practices parents attempted to get rid of the new born female child, who were generally considered as a blot to their ‘honor’ and ‘dignity’. These girl children were considered as some sort of burden by the members of their family and by the society. Some of the practices by which parents used to murder their female infants have been represented as:

Babies were put in earthen vessels and water pots and buried in the ground in *Pachhwarha* (backyard) which was attached to the house of almost every *Mian*. While during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the rulers and society of Jammu area got alive to the criminal nature of this custom, guardians embraced many ways at their order to murder their female babies and escape detection. They reported disorder and then death, which was sure to follow. They mercilessly treated their girls, ignored their taking care of and presented them to all the inclemencies of the weather. Sometimes they regulated them strong medicines with a goal to bring on sickness and death. A pill of opium was also used to acquire death in few hours. In Rajput families such activities and choices, to stop the life of the newborn children, were generally done by the older ladies of the family, particularly the grandma or grandaunt. In some cases the senior woman of the family instructed the Dai to execute the kid. The dai (senior women) had many techniques to finish these tasks. Such murders were also accomplished by disregard, by exposing the girl-baby to intense cold or heat, as the newborn child at its birth to the world is so fragile a creature that a puff of wind puts him out.<sup>xii</sup>

The condition of women in the Dogra rule deteriorated to such a level that they not only turned out to be suppressed and oppressed bodies, but were also included in the economic domain. They were seen as commodities and objectified in a manner that they were sold and bought like any other commodity. During a regime wherein ordinary people were debt ridden and enslaved to the government, the treatment of women became more painful. Their bodies turned out to be sensualized, wherein their bodily form and existence was turned into a means by which people could pay their debts. This has been documented as:

The Dogra rule was described by an abusive tax regime, and subjects were burdened under one affectation upon another. Even the dead couldn't be buried save by authorized and advantaged grave-diggers. Coolies who were engaged to carry the baggage of travelers gave up portion of their profit to the agents of the state. Under such a coercive system, the prostitutes couldn't be spared either. Most guardians were driven to selling their daughters under outrageous poverty for which, obviously, the Dogra system, and its abusive tax structure were crucially responsible.<sup>xiii</sup>

As indicated by the census 1921, in the brothels of Bombay, among 2995 sex workers, 41 were the locals of Kashmir. The prostitution racket at that point was not just provincial, however had by the 20th century spread to all over India.<sup>xiv</sup> Thus, as such, it very well may be envisioned that women during the Dogra regime were forced to enter the market-space of prostitution. Another component of this suppression and abuse of women during the Dogra rule can be seen by looking at the practice of forced labour. During the Dogra rule average citizens of Kashmir experienced fortified slavery. The most poisonous strategy for persecution was the system of *begar* or constrained work. The authorities upheld *begar* not exclusively to meet their own benefits, yet in addition to make sure about free work in agricultural fields.<sup>xvi</sup> Not only



men, however women were also compelled to be a piece of this state-supported constrained labor, even kids were not saved.

The people of Kashmir launched a number of movements of resistance against the cruelty of Dogras, and in all these efforts the presence of women was perceptible. Women played awfully a critical part against the Dogra rule, which is frequently not acknowledged. Without doubt, Women of Kashmir fought side by side with men, and even took up arms against the Dogra rulers.<sup>xvi</sup> The women played a conspicuous role in the first armed engagement against the Dogra's, which occurred in Gilgit when Maharaja Gulab Singh invaded the place. The people of Gilgit, supported by women, provided firm opposition when Maharaja Gulab Singh launched a military expedition against Gilgit. Under the command of Gowhar Rahman the courageous legends of Gilgit crushed the Dogra powers. Also, when Gulab Singh sent soldiers under Wazir Lakhpat to assume control over charge of the Kashmir valley from the then Governor Sheik Imam-ud-din who had just announced his freedom, Sheik with the popular support crushed the Dogra forces. In the achievement, an indispensable role was played by the wife of Sheik Imam-Uddin. She was "a woman of firm boldness and courageous character, treated by her people as *Madar-I-Meherban* who took up arms and took the pledge not to permit the sheik enter her chambers until he repelled the attackers. With the assistance of British troopers, the peoples resistance was nonetheless, crushed as on account of Gilgit  
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The contribution of women in the armed struggle against the Dogra rule in Kashmir in the period from 1930-1947 was significant. Indeed, women who participated in the armed struggle came from lower sections of society, and were illiterate and uneducated. After being uneducated and having social problems, these women of lower sections were not directed or systematized by educated women but it was their movement that educated women joined later in the period.<sup>xviii</sup> The disturbances broke out in 13 July 1931, soon after the disturbances the people stood in processions mainly composed of women folk. These determined women are mainly of lower sections and rejected to remain curbed within the four walls, some with suckling babies holding in their arms against the oppressive policies of Dogra regime.<sup>xix</sup> Women once again came out in processions on July 27 booming black flags. A Kashmiri woman while addressing the public gathering of women on 2<sup>nd</sup> august 1931 went on saying that, "*Our men should sit in their homes and wear Burqas! We are proud of our Punjabi Muslim brethren but sofar they have confined themselves in merely issuing statements. We ask help from the members of British parliament to take our pains to the League of Nations. We appeal to the army not to oppress women as it was no chivalry. But if they have any such instructions, they will find us ready to meet the challenge.*"<sup>xx</sup>

On 6 September, 1931 the regime gave over the city to military command, a horrendous horde of women protesters were *lathi* charged by the authorities in which the modesty of these women was outraged and almost ten women got wounds. Raja Hari Krishan Kaul, the Prime Minister of that period after this misfortune orders not to deal harshly with women demonstrations in future".<sup>xxi</sup> This request stayed just in papers just and once again "Military started shooting at a parade of women which was marching through the Maisuma bazaar Srinagar, in which one of the heroines Fazli died on September 24 1931. Sajida Bano from Shopian aged 25 years got bullet by military firing, she was pregnant and died along with her foetus. Jan Begum, widow of Abel Lone, Srinagar, was executed in a police firing. Another martyr heroine of the change was Jan Ded, who was unskilled and came from the lower section of the society and this is why her sacrifice has been ignored in the discourse of the freedom struggle in Kashmir. Her common abilities were not misused, despite the fact that she battled well against these shameful acts of the government. She was a realist and was total opposite from a significant number of the male political leaders of Kashmir in that she pushed secularism and shunned narrow communal loyalties.<sup>xxii</sup>

After a long lull and despite all the social and cultural Marginalisation, women again came into action during the "Quit Kashmir" Movement which was launched by Sheikh Abdullah. A considerable number of women came out on the roads to protest the tyrannical Dogra rule. This has been documented as:

The time frame from 1936-46 Kashmiri women took practically no part in politics. It was when in May 1946, the national conference launched "Quit Kashmir" under the leadership of Sheik Muhammad Abdullah. Indeed after 10 years politically cognizant women particularly who belong to working class of the society came in enormous numbers to take part in the movement. During quit Kashmir movement in 1946, the women of Srinagar, "hide the under-ground leaders, in any event, when they realized that the disclosure would mean the capture of their men folk and harassment for month. They loaned their garments to camouflage runaway leaders. They blended tea and prepared nourishment for those sequestered from everything. c They shouted slogans after curfew hours; they congregated at Dargah Sharief every week Inspite of military trucks and police guards". A slippery figure was "Noor Gujri-a milkman's daughter had an incredible capacity of producing energy among women folk because of her attractive speech. She was over and over captured by the authorities". Another heroin of the Quit Kashmir movement was Fatima, a peasant woman from Anantnag who was shot dead. Among numerous anonymous helpless women who languished over the reason for Kashmir might be referenced Zoni and Mukhta. Finally not least women specifically Begum Abdullah and Zainab begum both of whom have a place with more extravagant area and were taught assumed extraordinary part in Quit Kashmir movement after the capture of Sheik Muhammad Abdullah in May 1946.<sup>xxiii</sup>

In general women of Kashmir played a pivotal role in the freedom struggle, but history has always silenced and ignored them, and deliberately sidelined their contribution. Even after being threatened by the oppressive Dogra forces, the women section of Kashmiri society remained in the movement for the liberation of Jammu and Kashmir. Even in the traditional and patriarchal Kashmiri society, women generally remain confined to or around the family; their world of activities being restricted to the borders of their patriarchal household/community. While not considered equal inside and outside their families, they were usually subjugated, abused, discriminated and maltreated in the social life. As daughters, they remained dependent on fathers/male guardians; as wives, on their husbands; and as mothers, on their sons. The lifecycle of female dependency is always sponsored, propagated, reinforced, and supported by cultural and religious norms. The same sort of silencing, marginalization, objectification, commodification, suppression, and oppression of the women folk by the patriarchal forces happened during the Dogra rule, and unfortunately some of these practices are taking place even in the contemporary times in one form or another.

## Conclusion

The write up focuses on a historical overview of women during the Dogra rule, it talked about their position, issues, and difficulties. Subsequent to finding that women during the Dogra rule were truly mistreated and oppressed by means of different social, cultural, and governmental practices, this study also argues that how despite such a large scale marginalisation, silencing, and oppression, women in Kashmir were active political agents in the period before independence of India as well and fought alongside men against the oppressive rule of Dogra's. They took part in parades, processions, rallies, and even waged war against Dogra rule. While inspecting the chronicled foundation, the situation of women as underestimated and commodified elements under the Dogra rule has also been discussed. The investigation depicts that women have been targets of social and political abuse. Notwithstanding that, maybe Kashmir was the solitary state in the pre-freedom time frame where prostitution was both legitimized and empowered by the state. Women sex workers were enrolled, and the state determined impressive incomes by burdening them. The prostitution Rules of 1921 required these women to enroll with the state. The Act plainly was a significant instrument of state observation, and brought them inside the ambit of state allowing it to have a special interest over their pay and assets. The independence of India in 1947 has not only ruptured the deep structured alliance between the state and patriarchal forces, but has certainly substantially modified it. This needs to be further analysed and studied so that women get an equal share in the processes of nation-building, peace-keeping, and social up-liftment. It needs to be kept in mind that marginalisation, oppression, and silencing of women can take us back to the dark ages and giving them opportunities can bring more light to our lives.

## Endnotes:

<sup>i</sup>Khan G.H *Freedom Movement in Kashmir* 1931-1940; Light and Life Publications, New Delhi, Jammu, Trivandrum, 1980, pp. ix

<sup>ii</sup>Ibid p.1

<sup>iii</sup>*The treaty of Lahore*, article xii, cited from Khan G.H. *Freedom Movement in Kashmir* p.3

<sup>iv</sup>Altekar A.L, *Position of Women in Hindu Civilization*, Banaras, 1938, pp. 21 and 187.

<sup>v</sup>For details see Stein M.A, *Rajatarangini*, vol. II.

<sup>vi</sup>Anzoo Musaibibni Yousuf (2019) “Kashmiri Women Folk from Subservient to Striving Subjects during Dogra Regime in Jammu and Kashmir”. International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, Volume 9, Issue 1.

<sup>vii</sup>National archives of India, (hereinafter NAI), file no. 86, Foreign Department., Secret-E, March 1883

<sup>viii</sup>Bomzai P.N.K, *Socio Economic History of Kashmir*, Srinagar, 1987, op. cit. pp. 168-354.

<sup>ix</sup>Khan, M.I. *History of Srinagar*, Amir Publishers, Srinagar, 1978, p.115.

<sup>x</sup>Thorpe, Robert. *Kashmir Misgovernment*, London, 1870, p.72

<sup>xi</sup>Sharma Deepika and Rana Anita, *Social Evils Among Women In Jammu And Kashmir During Dogra Period And Colonialism And Reforms (1846-1925)*.Pp-101

<sup>xii</sup>Anzoo, Mussaib and Dr. Ajay Kumar Ghosh. “Kashmiri Women Folk from Subservient to Striving Subjects during Dogra Regime in Jammu and Kashmir”. *IJSRP*, Vol. 9, Issue 1, January 2019. Pp 547.

<sup>xiii</sup>Hasnain F.M. (ed.), *Kashmir misgovernment*, Robert Thorp, Gulshan publications, Srinagar, Kashmir, India, 1980

<sup>xiv</sup>NAI, File no. 469, Home Department, 16 November 1921, p.3

<sup>xv</sup>Khan G.H. *Freedom Movement in Kashmir*, p -13

<sup>xvi</sup>Bazaz P.N., *Daughters of Vitasta*, Pamposh publications, New Delhi, 1959 reprint, Gulshan publications Srinagar, 2005.

<sup>xvii</sup>Khan. G.H. *Freedom Movement in Kashmir*, p-78

<sup>xviii</sup>Mohammad Yasin and Madhavi Yasin (ed.), *Mysteries and Glimpses of Kashmir*, p. 197-198

<sup>xix</sup>Anzoo, Mussaib and Dr. Ajay Kumar Ghosh. “Kashmiri Women Folk from Subservient to Striving Subjects during Dogra Regime in Jammu and Kashmir”. *IJSRP*, Vol. 9, Issue 1, January 2019. Pp 551.

<sup>xx</sup>Saraf Mohammed Yousuf, *Kashmir's Fight- For Freedom* Vol. 1(1819-1946), Ferozsons Ltd, Lahore, Pakistan, 1977 p.382-384

<sup>xxi</sup>Bazaz. P.N., *Daughters of Vitasta*, Pamposh publications, New Delhi, 1959 reprint, Gulshan publications Srinagar, 2005. p.246

<sup>xxii</sup>Malik, Shazia. *Women's Development Amid Conflicts in Kashmir: A Socio-Cultural Study*. Partridge India, 2014. pp. 30-31

<sup>xxiii</sup> Ibid pp. 35-36